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The Presidency of Jimmy Carter and the Emerging Politics of Gay Rights and Evangelical Religion

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Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Durham University

The School of Government and International Affairs

University of Durham, United Kingdom

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Abstract

This thesis examines an unexplored aspect of Jimmy Carter's Presidency, and in particular his role in the development and growth of gay rights in the United States. It employs a qualitative approach, drawing extensively on archival and published sources, including a wide range of previously unpublished materials, as well as a series of targeted interviews. It seeks to explore what, if any, contribution Carter made to advancing the rights of homosexuals in the USA.

The primary contribution of this thesis to the literature on Carter is in the area of historical understanding. While much has been written about Carter's achievements (or lack thereof) in a range of areas, relatively little attention has been paid to the progress made in the area of gay rights at this time. This thesis also makes an important contribution, more generally speaking, in the area of the social history of the modern United States and in exploring the role of interest groups in determining US policy.

Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that Carter's legacy in the area of gay rights is much more positive than is generally assumed. The careful exploration of what actually happened during his presidency, and a range of decisions taken and changes made by his administration, reveals a series of fundamental changes that tangibly improved the gay rights situation. The thesis argues that Carter's legacy in this area should be re-evaluated and given more respect. The decisions he made and the policies he implemented contributed significantly to improving the lives of homosexuals; at the same time he played an important role in changing public discourse about homosexuality in the USA.

Declaration

None of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in the University of Durham or any other university. None of the material contained in this thesis is based on joint research. The content of this thesis consists of the author's original individual contribution with appropriate recognition of any references being indicated throughout.

Dedication

To my parents: for everything they have taught me and have done for me.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor John Dumbrell and Dr. Stephen Welch, to whom I am forever grateful for their endless support, encouragement and tireless guidance throughout this project.

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INTRODUCTION

In the years after his presidency, polls showed that most Americans considered Carter to have been an unsuccessful president despite the fact that he had not led America into war, nor abandoned his commitment to human rights and his policies had not threatened the national economy or the social fabric in any way. As a result, some commentators argued that he would be remembered as much for what he had not done as for what he had accomplished.[1]

In later years there was some attempt to revisit his legacy, and almost uniquely in the murky world of politics, after the foundation of the President Carter Library in 1986, researchers uncovered that Carter had been completely consistent during his presidency in terms of actually saying what he thought. In fact, he had come through on most of the pledges he made during his campaign,[2] and had been praised for being exceptionally productive, especially during the earlier part of his term,[3] while also bringing a positive change to how human rights issues were perceived both at home and abroad.[4]

The copious private notes and memos he wrote during his term never deviated from what he was saying in public, which is an unusual trait in a politician. Whatever one thought of his views and actions, he had invariably been honest.[5] John Dumbrell's *The Carter Presidency: A Re-Evaluation* in 1993 was the first significant work to offer a different perspective on Carter's policies and decisions. This work played a very important role in examining aspects of Carter's presidency which had been unexplored and made a significant contribution to his legacy, especially in terms of his human rights policies. Dumbrell's work triggered a series of works which examined and on some occasion re-evaluated Carter's human rights policies, mostly in regard to his foreign policy. Because of these works, it is

[1] Brinkley, 1996: 508.
[2] Krukones, 1985: 143.
[3] Skowronek, 1997: 380.
[4] Pfluger, 1989: 715.
[5] Brinkley, 1996: 526.

now recognised that the Carter presidency "opened the way for the astonishing explosion of 'human rights' across the American political landscape."[6] However, although several of Carter's human rights policies have been examined, his gay rights policies remain until now unexamined and under-appreciated.

At the same time, although the intervening decades have seen a dramatic increase in the quantity and quality of academic and other literature dedicated to gay rights, queer theory and so forth, Carter's role in advancing gay rights has not been substantially addressed. Extant literature that does address the issue to a degree falls under a number of headings: material about interest groups, including their own correspondence and internal documentation; the general history of the Carter presidency; the general history of gay rights as an element of human rights; and highly committed, strongly ideological material produced by scholars, often in the area of queer studies, notably Canaday's important book *The Straight State*

However, still no explicit attention has been given to Carter's contribution towards advancing gay rights. By and large, historians and commentators have been less than impressed by Carter's contribution in this area while his efforts are very often misunderstood. For example, writing in 2001, Murdoch and Price comment that Carter was the very first presidential candidate "to have promised to issue a presidential order advancing gay rights" and that "he never kept that little-noticed pledge."[7] In addition, gay rights activists themselves, at the end of Carter's presidency, were generally unhappy with his efforts. This was because progress was not being achieved as fast as they wanted, leading to the generally accepted view today that Carter's efforts were limited.

[6] Da Vinha, 2014: 100, quoting Moyn, 2010: 154.
[7] 2001: 193.

There are many reasons why Carter's gay rights policies have not been thoroughly examined and remain underappreciated. Perhaps the most obvious is that they received little attention at the time and were obscured by the hostility of gay rights activists when Carter left office. This thesis discovered that even some prominent gay campaigners who were active in the late 1970s were not aware of some of Carter's gay rights policies. This seems to have been due to five possible reasons or a combination of them:

1. The Carter administration avoided giving undue publicity to its gay rights policies, fearing the reaction of evangelicals who were Carter's closest allies in the 1976 elections. Professor Clyde Wilcox stated in a personal interview that he believes "Carter was ahead of his time" and that his gay rights policies were "less visible and therefore less likely to evoke a backlash."[8]
2. That generally Carter is rarely given credit for the impact he had may have a lot to do with his modesty, and a degree of personal ambivalence towards politics. Vice President Walter Mondale said, "Carter thought politics was sinful. The worst thing you could say to Carter if you wanted to do something was that it was politically the best thing to do."[9] Surprisingly, the Carter administration resisted trumpet-blowing even when dealing with gay rights activists. As we will see in Chapter Eight, a letter from Carter's office to activists in 1980, aimed at gaining their support in the forthcoming presidential elections, contained only a selection of his achievements in the gay sphere, omitting others of great importance.
3. The media at the time rarely gave much coverage to the issue of gay rights. Moreover, Carter had failed to establish a positive relationship with the press and was not good at

[8] Professor Clyde Wilcox in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.
[9] Gillon, 1992: 201.

communicating his successes. He did not fit neatly into the stereotypes which journalists were used to and was difficult to pin down as a news story.[10]

4. Carter's administration did not see gay rights as an issue of major importance, especially in comparison with competing issues and policies. M.G. Abernathy, writing only four years after Carter's 1980 defeat, states with regard to his record on domestic civil rights that, "The President's preoccupation with several major foreign policy problems… could well have led him to accord his civil rights contributions less weight than they probably deserve. They may not have been exceptional but they were surely of greater importance than anything in the Nixon or Ford Administrations."[11]
5. At the time of the 1980 election, gay activists believed that Carter had not done enough. The fact is Carter had done much more than he promised; in fact, it was his successes which raised the expectations of his supporters and prompted them to keep asking for more. The fact that the demands which Carter did not fulfil were not fulfilled by any American president for the next thirty years demonstrates how unrealistic they were at the time.

All the above factors played their part in keeping Carter's gay rights policies underappreciated and mostly unknown. However, by using a wealth of previously unpublished archival material, and personal interviews with prominent gay rights activists of the 1970s, this thesis explores the role of Carter in advancing gay rights in the United States during his presidency. In the light of this material, we re-evaluate the published record where it touches on Carter's input to gay rights, as well as exploring areas that have never been examined before.

[10] Rozell, 1989: 13.
[11] Abernathy, 1984: 106.

This thesis argues that Carter's contribution to wider rights for homosexual Americans has been overlooked and underestimated. Archival records and prominent gay rights campaigners who were active at the time agree that Carter did much more to advance gay rights than he was been credited with and that he *did* usher in positive changes, even if he was often the last to draw attention to them. When Carter *could* make a difference, he generally did, and when he could not, at least he tried, despite a hostile Congress and a difficult political and cultural climate of the time. In fact, a series of policies and actions with respect to gay rights led, among other progressive changes, to the dissatisfaction of the religious right, contributing substantially to Carter's ultimate defeat in the 1980 Presidential election. By examining all these factors, this thesis provides a more complete picture of Carter's role in this important area of human rights.

It should be noted that although the thesis provides a completely new perspective about Carter's contribution in advancing gay rights, it is not a revisionist account of his presidency with regard to the evangelical right or his efforts for gay rights. The thesis gives a far more detailed and scholarly description of them and there is a need for that, because, ironically, even Carter's own administration did not effectively memorialise his achievements. Too often it got things wrong or allowed his successes to pass unnoticed.

Carter's efforts in advancing gay rights, and his relationship with the gay rights movement, particularly with the National Gay Task Force (NGTF), is the major focus of the thesis. To a secondary degree, it also examines the role of the evangelical right movement with regard to Carter's gay rights policies. During Carter's presidency, the evangelical right movement acted as a countermovement, attempting to preserve the status quo and prevent any social reforms that would advance gay rights.

This thesis argues that Carter did considerably more to advance the cause of gay rights in the United States than is generally recognised. Specifically, the research shows that

Carter contributed to gay rights through legislation; legitimised the gay rights movement and helped bring about changes in public discourse by treating gay people respectfully and equal members of the society; and convinced the gay community of its own strength as a social movement and its ability to achieve legal and political change.

The thesis came to this conclusion by exploring a number of important issues:

- Policy changes and decisions taken by Carter to improve gay rights.
- The policies and decisions that damaged Carter's relationship with both sides.
- Carter's relationship with the evangelical right and gay rights activists before his election, during his presidency and during the 1980 Presidential election campaign.
- How groups/movements such as the evangelical right and the gay rights movement influenced and attempted to influence national domestic policy during Carter's Presidency.

By examining these issues, the thesis makes an original and considerable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the Carter presidency in the area of gay rights. It also contributes to our knowledge of the influence on the Carter presidency of specific pro- and anti-gay rights interest groups, representing a nascent culture war; and on the emergence of the modern gay rights movement under the Carter presidency.

METHOD AND SOURCES

The methodology applied in this thesis in the collection and collation of the information used is entirely qualitative. Alexander George[12] said that, "qualitative analysis of a limited number of crucial communications may often yield better clues to the particular intentions of a particular speaker at one moment in time than more standardized quantitative methods."

[12] George, A.L. (1995) Quantitative and Qualitative Approach to Contents Analysis. In Poll, I.S. (ed.) (1995) *Trends in Content Analysis*, edited by. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press: 7.

Here, I have chosen to use a qualitative method principally because I deal with the *quality* of individuals, organisations, and the processes they engaged in, rather than attempting to measure quantity, intensity, or frequency of interactions.

Much of the research presented here comes from archival material. This qualitative approach, based on the examination of original evidence and documents, should be treated as a source of primary data and information, as it presents challenges in identifying, locating, and interpreting relevant documents. The application of the archival technique enables the researcher to highlight the most critical aspects of the question under investigation.[13] By analysing the archival material as it relates to Carter, we can critically examine and evaluate the general issues associated with the structure and conduct of gay rights organisations and the evangelical right. Most importantly, we can explore Carter's actions in response to these movements and his contribution to advancing gay rights. A significantly large bulk of the resources has been taken from a wealth of largely unpublished material housed in the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (JCPL) and the archive of the National Gay Task Force at Cornell University (CU). Furthermore, relevant documents and resources have been consulted from the archives of Midge Costanza at the Midge Costanza Institute, from the Duke University Libraries and from Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers at the archives of the University of Connecticut.

In addition to documentary sources, both factual information and evaluation of its importance has been derived from open-ended, semi-structured personal interviews with people who were directly involved in the development of the gay rights agenda. These were carried out in person, by email and, in a small number of cases, by telephone. With the exception of two interviewees – Louis Crew and Marilyn Haft – who had to be interviewed

[13] Anderson, 2010.

twice, the rest were only contacted once for interviews. Furthermore, in one case I received a recorded video in response to interview answers that had been sent by email.

In terms of selecting interviewees, I considered it extremely important to select a diverse range of people, including prominent Carter aides, gay and lesbian rights activists and members of the evangelical right who were active in the 1970s, as well as historians and other academics who are experts on the subjects under discussion. My results in achieving this goal were mixed. Most of the interviewees are very prominent gay and lesbian rights activists who were active in the 1970s. Among them, I managed to have a balanced number of men and women activists. Several experts in various fields, including authors, historians, members of the Democratic Party, Carter's aides and academics, all with knowledge of the subject and the era, were also interviewed.

However, while I also approached several evangelical leaders and activists who were active in the 1970s, the outcome here was less positive. Initially, most agreed to be interviewed and seemed happy to speak about Jimmy Carter. However, when I sent them the interview questions, most of which were about gay rights, they did not respond. As a result, only four evangelicals have been interviewed for this study, none of whom belong to the evangelical right.

Depending on the expertise and activities of the interviewees, different questions were designed. For example, questions posed to gay and lesbian activists primarily covered issues relating to their evaluation of Carter's policy and actions during the 1970s; and whether, in their opinion, Carter's policies, decisions and efforts met the expectations of gays and lesbians at the time. It is worth noting that not only what they knew, but also what they did not know about Carter's contribution provides material for this study. The process of interviewing gay/lesbian rights activists showed that some of them had very little knowledge of the contributions made by Carter to their cause. This demonstrates how distant this group's

perception of Carter's effort and contribution was from reality. Other questions posed to this cohort related to their knowledge and interests in specific areas. Furthermore, one of the evangelical interviewees spent a long time speaking about the meeting he held with Carter in the White House before the 1980 elections.

I also interviewed people who were able to contribute to issues included in my study that were not directly relevant to its main theme, or were of less importance. For example, in order to obtain information about the shape, structure and condition of the Democratic Party in the mid-1970s, I interviewed Professor Michael Dukakis, an active member of the Democratic Party at the time, and Byron Shafer, Professor of American politics and expert on the subject. Similarly, I interviewed several academics and historians who are experts on most of the issues mentioned in my thesis. In total, thirty-two people were interviewed for this thesis.

An issue which plays a pivotal role in my study is the personal testimony of gay rights activists concerning events during Carter's presidency and that needs to be emphasised here. This issue has also been highlighted in Lapovsky et al[14] when they note that people's personal recollections are "too subjective and idiosyncratic" but that, in the absence of any supportive documentation, it should be treated as a second-best solution to more objective material. The authors argue that the histories of marginalised groups are often treated as unimportant and, hence, are not systematically archived. According to Professor Ann Cvetkovich,[15] Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Texas, this problem is primarily associated with so-called "institutional neglect" as well as the process of selection by dominant forces.[16] Furthermore, a lack of documentation and archiving of

[14] 1993.
[15] Cvetkovich, 2003: 241.
[16] Hartman, 1998; Cvetkovich, 2003.

marginalised groups' activities may also be due to the psychological effects of oppression and repression.[17]

In particular, when individuals live with oppression, and are working hard to combat their oppressors, they may find very little time to record daily events and collect the appropriate documents in support of their activities. As Cvetkovich points out, a different approach is necessary for studying the past of the gay community, for what she refers to as "historical absence" is itself an aspect of trauma.[18] She compares archives of gay and lesbian experience to "other archives of trauma, such as those that commemorate the Holocaust, slavery or war," and states that the history of trauma "often depends on the evidence of memory, not just because of the absence of other forms of evidence but because of the need to address traumatic experience through witnessing and retelling,"[19] affirming that, therefore, one needs to find new, different ways of theorising and memorialising these submerged histories.[20] It is, therefore, fair to argue that the evidence of these personal testimonies should be treated as vitally important in the long histories of gay and lesbian communities in the United States of America.[21] In highlighting the so-called "exclusions and invisibilities," Avery Gordon, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, poses a fundamental question to sociologists to rethink their traditional, conventional way of approaching social scientific research by acknowledging the "material effects" that are produced by those individuals who have fought all their lives against oppression, but whose voices have been silenced.[22]

Insofar as this study is concerned, these personal testimonies have played a key role in

[17] Cvetkovich, 2003.
[18] Cvetkovich, 2002: 137.
[19] Cvetkovich, 2002: 110.
[20] Cvetkovich, 2003: 6.
[21] Cvetkovich, 2003: 241.
[22] Gordon, 1997: 17.

developing my arguments. Therefore, transcending "conventional forms of documentation"[23] is not only useful, but necessary, when writing about the histories of marginalised communities such as the gay community in the 1970s, whose own records are typically lost through "resistance and neglect."[24] For the purpose of this thesis, I have interviewed seventeen prominent gay and lesbian rights activists who have described their lives, activities and events over forty years. Their narrated testimonies form a major part of the evidence relating to gay and lesbian communities' struggle for survival, rights and recognition.

Finally, I have also made reference to an extensive range of books, academic and newspaper articles and other published sources, and to relevant websites; the secondary data. The examination of major gay publications of the time, such as *The Advocate*, *The Blade*, the *Gay Community News* and *The Lesbian Tide*, is particularly important. These provide a glimpse into how Carter and gay rights issues were seen through gay-run national print media. Equally important is the examination of the major mainstream US newspapers, namely the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, as they also provide insight into how Carter and gay rights issues were seen by the mainstream press.

The data gathered from interviews and archival material provides useful, reliable details and contemporary information for the study. The second group of secondary data has been carefully selected to complement the empirical investigation. The narrative and descriptive method employed by this thesis is similar to that used in the works of Professor John Dumbrell, especially *The Carter Presidency: A Re-Evaluation.*

[23] Cvetkovich, 2003:7.
[24] Cvetkovich, 2002: 10.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The thesis consists of nine chapters plus the introduction and the conclusion. Here is a brief overview.

Chapter One introduces Jimmy Carter, as well as the two other main players in the thesis, the evangelical and the gay rights movements. Chapter Two discusses the theoretical context of the thesis and how it relates to the subject, as well as the thesis's objectives. Chapter Three examines primarily the 1976 Presidential elections and the role of gay rights, but also touches on the evangelical right in the same context. Although the role of the evangelicals has been examined before, the same has not happened with the gay rights activists and this is the main focus of this chapter. Chapter Four looks at the White House breakthrough meeting between gay rights activists and members of Carter's administration. This is a well-known and researched event, but because of its importance it could not be overlooked in this thesis. Further, the thesis is looking at new and unpublished primary sources to examine the background of the meeting and its aftermath but most importantly its contribution to the cause of gay rights. This chapter also examines the reaction of the evangelical right to the meeting.

Chapter Five looks at the main issues for the gay rights movement during Carter's term in office, Carter's response to them and the progress that was made in these areas. With the use of a vast number of new and unpublished primary sources, it examines Carter's policies and decisions that helped to advance gay rights. The chapter also deals with those things Carter failed to do in the area of gay rights and the reasons for this. It also examines the reaction of the evangelical right to Carter's advances for gay rights. Chapter Six explores the National Women's Conference and the White House Conference on Families which were equally important for gay rights activists and the evangelical right. Again, by looking at new

and unpublished primary sources we examine the background, the actual events and the importance for gay rights of these two signature Conferences. Chapter Seven examines Carter's relationship with gay rights activists and the evangelical right during his presidency. It examines the pressure he felt from both movements, how he dealt with it and what was their reaction. Chapter Eight considers the 1980s elections and the roles of both the gay rights activists and the evangelical right. As in the 1976 elections, the role of the evangelical right has been extensively examined, but that of gay rights organizations remains mostly unexamined. Chapter Nine provides a brief discussion of gay rights since 1981, from Carter's defeat by Reagan up to the present. It is important to know what followed Carter's exit in order to understand and appreciate Carter's policies and decisions regarding gay rights.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTEXT: JIMMY CARTER, GAY RIGHTS AND EVANGELICALS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and provide the backgrounds of the three main players in this thesis: Jimmy Carter, gay rights activists and evangelicals. It gives a concise but very informative summary of Jimmy Carter's life, beliefs and political career prior to his run for the Presidency in 1976. It also examines the history and development of homosexual activism and of evangelicalism; including the creation of the two movements, and the struggle of gay rights activists for their rights.

JIMMY CARTER

James Earl "Jimmy" Carter was born on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia, where his family lived and grew peanuts and cotton.[25] Carter's attitudes and behaviour towards the poor were moulded by his father, Earl, a charitable, caring individual.[26] In 1942, Carter, then seventeen, went to Atlanta to begin a general engineering preparation programme at Georgia Institute of Technology, prior to joining the Naval Academy. In 1946, Carter was officially sworn into the Navy.[27] In July 1945, Carter met Rosalynn Smith, two years younger than him and a devout Christian. The couple decided to marry shortly after his graduation.[28] After the wedding he worked as an ensign in the Navy.[29] He applied for admission into the Navy's

[25] Gaver, 1977: 4.
[26] Morris, 1996: 36.
[27] Godbold, 2010: 48.
[28] Sheehy (*New York Magazine*), 22 November 1976: 54. "Ladies and Gentlemen: The Second President- Sister Rosalynn."
[29] Bourne, 1997: 55.

most elite group of nuclear engineers and was accepted,[30] requiring a move to New York.[31] Following the senior Carter's death in 1953, Carter, Rosalynn and their children returned to Georgia to run the family farm. By the end of 1962, Carter had amassed a fortune, with annual gross revenue of about $2.5 million.[32] He was also deeply involved in local social and business communities and in the church, as well as being supportive of the local Black community. He had also become interested in civil and human rights.[33]

Georgia remained segregated even in the late 1950s, despite the Federal ruling of 1954 on school integration. In 1955, a peaceful demonstration against integration was held by the local community under the leadership of the Chief of Police and the Baptist minister; Carter rejected their invitation to participate.[34] As the civil rights movement gathered strength, Carter's interest in politics was fuelled by the emergence of exciting new leaders like President Kennedy and Martin Luther King. He could also see the gradual changes taking place in the state as more Black students joined whites at university or in public schools.[35] For Carter, the idea of a perfectly fair society went hand in hand with his faith, and he became fully committed to civil rights.

When Carter ran for the Georgia Senate as an outsider, he had to face the popular incumbent, Senator Moore.[36] Following a long struggle with the support of attorney Warren Forston, and a large number of Federal judges, Carter proved that there had been tampering with a significant number of ballot boxes. Through the write-in-vote, on 5th November, Carter was declared the winner with 3,012 votes to 2,182. On January 13, 1963, at a gala party in

[30] Morris, 1996: 110.
[31] Carter, 1975: 55.
[32] Morris, 1996: 115.
[33] Among many see: Bourne, 1997; Godbold, 2010; Goldman, 1976; Morris, 1996.
[34] Carter, 1975; 45.
[35] Morris, 1996: 126-8.
[36] Carter, 1992: 49-51.

Atlanta, Carter learned that he had become a State Senator once the lieutenant governor called him to come forward to take the oath of the office.[37]

In early 1964, as chairman of the Georgia Senate's Committee for Education, Carter publically condoned racial equality for the very first time. At that time he was highly influenced by two African Americans who worked with him: Horace Tate, executive director of the Black Teachers' Association; and Leroy Johnson, the only African American senator from Atlanta.[38] Through the Committee, Carter established an education programme for the poor, offering free textbooks and transportation.[39] Throughout the remainder of 1964, Carter delivered many speeches about community, education, human rights and civil rights, helping him to secure his third and final term as state Senator.[40]

On June 12, 1966, Carter announced his intention to run for Governor. Despite great effort he lost to his rival, Callaway, by a large margin.[41] A week later he contacted his main sponsor and advisor, Hamilton Jordan, and assured him that he was ready to try again in four years.[42] Carter's defeat in 1966 was attributed to his lack of a clear economic policy.[43] He was quoted as saying that "as a leader I have the responsibility to establish justice first."[44] In short, his politics was a reflection of his Christianity; to make life better for his fellow humans, he had to offer justice through government. He was genuinely convinced that sincere commitment to social compassion, coupled with his faith, would help social justice and welfare.[45]

When Carter was defeated in the Georgia gubernatorial campaign of 1966, his intense discouragement forced him into a period of personal re-evaluation. His sister Ruth, an

[37] Carter, 1975: 181.
[38] Carter, 1992: 186.
[39] Godbold, 2010: 106-7.
[40] Carter, 1975: 68.
[41] Morris, 1996: 150.
[42] Morris, 1996: 150.
[43] Morris, 1996: 160.
[44] Carter, 1978: 93.
[45] Morris, 1996: 161.

evangelist, had told him that she had been transformed as a new Christian. Carter wanted to know how she had managed to overcome her serious personal problems. In a long conversation between Ruth and Jimmy, she asked him if he would give up all his possessions to be "born again" and he said that he would. When she asked him whether he would give up his politics, Jimmy replied, "I wouldn't."[46] Carter pledged to take his religion more seriously.[47] For him, this experience was that of being "born again."[48]

In the light of these fundamental commitments to universalism, Carter had realised that America had changed significantly and that religion alone did not have all the answers. The Vietnam War was still going on and the younger generation continued to experiment with drugs and sexual freedom, while the issue of civil rights had receded somewhat.[49] By early 1969, Carter had learned to take advantage of the support and advice of some highly intelligent consultants and campaign managers. In 1970, Carter ran for Governor again; in the second week of September, he received nearly 49% of the vote – just short of the 50% required for outright victory – against 38% for Sanders. In a runoff, Carter was elected Governor of Georgia with 62% of the vote.[50]

Carter's beliefs

Carter was both an evangelical and a Southern Baptist. By the end of the 1970s, Baptists represented one of the most powerful Protestant groups, with some twenty-seven million followers in the USA, and thirty-one million worldwide. The Southern Baptists were (and are) one of the largest Christian denominations in the South and the Southwest of USA. They have been described variously as fundamentalists, evangelicals, pietists, and sectarians.[51] By

[46] Glad, 1980: 108.
[47] Kucharsky, 1976: 1-8, 45-47.
[48] Ribuffo, 1992: 215; Gaver, 1977: 26.
[49] Morris, 1996: 166-70.
[50] Morris, 1969: 163.
[51] Nielsen Jr, 1977:118.

the late 1970s, the Southern Baptist Convention was the largest of any Baptist convention in the world, with up to 13 million members and 35,000 churches over 2000 district associations, and 33 state conventions.[52] Up to the late 1960s most Southern Baptist churches, including Carter's, were racially segregated.[53]

Carter had seen corruption and injustice everywhere in the South, and thought that he could save his fellow citizens by becoming directly involved in politics. To him, politics was all about the maintenance of justice and nothing else, and his Christian faith was expressed in his commitment to Christ's message of the rights of all.[54] As Fink puts it, "Carter's religious faith helped to meld a conservative mentality and a liberal social outlook into a practical political philosophy.[55] While he was "deeply reverent", however, Carter was not a Biblical literalist.[56] He stated that: "… the Bible, though inspired by God, was written by fallible human beings who shared the knowledge and beliefs of their time. The science and astronomy of the Bible are inaccurate by modern standards… So it is appropriate to consider the times in which the Bible was written when interpreting the meaning of Scripture and its message for us today."[57]

Time magazine quoted Carter as saying, "I find it difficult to question Holy Scripture, but I admit I do have trouble with Paul sometimes, especially when he says that a woman's place is with her husband, and that she should keep quiet and should cover her head in the church. I just can't go along with him on that."[58] This candid remark is very revealing of Carter's dilemma as a devout Christian from a Southern Baptist church who lived and worked with strong women whom he respected, and who also went to some effort to increase the

[52] Gaver, 1977: 88.
[53] Nielsen Jr, 1977: 81.
[54] Smidt, 2001: 203.
[55] Fink, 1980: 8.
[56] Kuchersky, 1978: 8.
[57] Carter, 1997: 128.
[58] *TIME*, 10 May 1976: 20. "Jimmy Carter's Big Breakthrough."

numbers of women in important government positions. Carter's ability to live with the inevitable cognitive dissonance reveals how he could believe in the Bible while ignoring those aspects that were contrary to his strong commitment to equal rights. Just before his Presidential election, when he was asked if he would use the office of President to demonstrate his Christian convictions, Carter plainly replied: "I would try to exemplify in every moment of my life those attitudes and actions of Christianity that I believe in. I would ask God for guidance on decisions affecting our country and make those decisions after evaluating the alternatives the best I could."[59] However, he also said: "I don't look on the presidency as a pastorate... no… Although Teddy Roosevelt said it's a bully pulpit, no, I don't look on it with religious connotations. But it gives me a chance to serve, and it also gives me a chance to magnify whatever influence I have, for either good or bad, and I hope it will be for good."[60]

Peter Bourne, Director of the Office of Drug Abuse Policy during Carter's Presidency, a close personal friend of Carter, who served as his special assistant on health issues, told the author that "Carter's beliefs were very much rooted in his Baptist religion. As with all Baptists he believed that individuals made their own relationship with God and did not need organized religious institutions to mediate between people and God. He was also very sympathetic to the Quakers who shared similar views and he once told me had he not been brought up a Baptist he would like to have been a Mennonite whose views most closely paralleled those he held as an adult. He is very knowledgeable about the history of the Baptists in the US and the role of early leaders like Roger Williams and John Leland who fought for individual rights and freedom of religion opposing the establishment of a state religion as in Britain."[61]

[59] Gaver, 1977: 13.
[60] Norton Jr, 1976: 87.
[61] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.

One of the most talked about issues in Carter's life is associated with the claim that he was a doubtful Christian until he became a "born again."[62] His becoming "born again" was based on the principles of the Bible, Baptist Church teaching, and his own self-disciplined attitudes to life and death. The concept of being "born again" is regarded as one associated with the Southern Baptism Church, referring to purity and peace within oneself.[63] Carter was deeply religious, the perfect fit for the ideal evangelical. However some of his views were markedly liberal, which would impact seriously on his relationship with the evangelicals, as we will explore in the chapters to come.

Carter defined the Civil Rights Act as "the best thing that ever happened to the South ... They liberated the whites as well as the blacks." Carter emphasized that "not only blacks have a right to equality, but blacks are equal." Whilst in the Georgia State Senate, Carter voted for the amendment of the segregation law and particularly that relating to the test of literacy designed to keep blacks from voting.[64] Carter had supported John F. Kennedy's reforms towards integration and in 1963, having been the chairman of the Georgia Senate's Committee on Educational Matters, he publically criticised racial inequality.[65] During the late 1960s, as a state Senator, he was threatened several times and his family business was boycotted by white supremacists because of his political support of African Americans.[66] Once elected as Governor in 1970, he supported equal rights for African Americans. Carter decided to use the office to make sure that racial discrimination in Georgia had ended. As Governor of Georgia, Carter fought continuously for civil rights for all minorities, which would win him much support from Black voters when he ran for President.[67]

[62] Gaver, 1977: 86.
[63] Spear, 1994: 83-116.
[64] Nielsen Jr, 1977: 83.
[65] Godbold, 2010: 106.
[66] Carter, 1996: 68.
[67] Gaver, 1978: 46.

On the issue of human rights and social justice, Martin Luther King Jr also heavily influenced Carter. Carter is believed to have placed a portrait of him in the Georgia state capitol building during his term as Governor and he said, "I would rather die than disappoint Andrew Young or Martin Luther King Sr. or Coleman Young." Martin Luther King Sr. said about Carter, "I know what he is and what he stands for... I'm with him all the way."[68]

Carter's Belief in the Separation of Church and State

In a sense, however, Carter's beliefs about homosexuals and homosexuality are something of a red herring. He had always been extremely clear about his belief in the separation of church and state, so whether he, as a practising Christian, believed homosexuality to be sinful or not was essentially irrelevant. Quite simply, his view seems to have been that if someone was homosexual, it was none of his business, nor was it the business of the American state. Furthermore, he also believed that homosexuals should have equal rights with everyone else and that they should not be discriminated against, harassed or abused.[69]

Consistently, Carter held that a clear division between church and state was extremely important, and that it was in fact fundamental to the practice of his Baptist faith.[70] In this context, what might be sinful should not necessarily be criminal as well. Dr William Steding,[71] senior fellow at the Centre for Presidential History, describes Carter's views in this area as "more accurately categorised as a check valve than a wall, which allows the flow of influence from church to state but disallows the flow of influence from state to church". In a letter to the American Humanist Association in October 1976, Carter wrote that "an important tenet of the Baptist faith is complete separation of church and state. I hold this

[68] Nielsen Jr, 1977: 85.
[69] Letter from Robert B. Havely to Jean O'Brien, 4 October 1976. File: Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (cited hereafter as JCPL).
[70] Canipe, 2008: 283.
[71] 2014: 40.

view. And I have not found it to impose a strain either on my personal religious convictions or on my performance in public office… I've never used political office to force my religious convictions on someone else … So there would be no problem in my Presidency in keeping separate religion and government. I would be a strong defender of the First Amendment and interpret it very strictly."[72]

The separation of Church and State was a much talked-about issue during Carter's political career and public life. Having followed his parents' and some theologians' (Tillich, Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, and Barth) lessons and advice, Carter melded a rather activist existentialist approach in his Christian faith vis-à-vis church-state separation.[73] Carter openly discussed this issue and stated that, "As a Baptist I believe very strongly in the principle of separation of Church and state,"[74] although he also made it clear that his personal faith could not but influence everything he did.[75]

The record also shows that despite the fact that he was a deeply religious man, and despite believing that the tenets of Christianity were compatible with America's commitment to "freedom, democracy and the pursuit of justice,"[76] Carter "did not engage in civil religion to the same extent that some of his predecessors had."[77] Carter also defended his religious beliefs, while also making clear his view that he did not wish to impose them on anyone else, during his infamous *Playboy* interview at the end of which the interviewer concluded that Carter was "a guy who believes in his personal God and let the rest of us believe whatever the hell we want."[78]

[72] Flowers, 1983: 116.
[73] Flippen, 2011: 27.
[74] Gaver, 1978: 17.
[75] Smith, 2011: 62.
[76] Berggren, 2005: 55.
[77] Smidt, 2001: 198.
[78] Schulman, 2001: 122.

Carter's insistence on the separation of church and state may appear at first glance to be a mere detail of his attitude towards and beliefs around government, but in fact it is hugely important to our topic. In this way, Carter could believe that certain behaviours were sinful – such as homosexual intercourse – while also believing, just as firmly, that consensual sexual encounters and loving relationships, even if sinful, were no business of the state and should not generally be a matter for legislation. We will revisit this issue later on.

The Human Rights President

Carter has long been recognised as the "human rights" President. Carter entered his Presidential term determined to make human rights the cornerstone of America's foreign policy and, domestically, to make America a better, fairer place. Along with his deep-rooted evangelical faith, he was committed to human rights abroad and at home, and believed that religion and politics shared a joint purpose, which was to establish "justice in a sinful world."[79]

The rhetoric of human rights had become increasingly important in American politics in recent decades, and Carter was determined to make human rights a cornerstone of his presidency.[80] Given the climate of the time, with growing disenchantment with the Vietnam War, and upset around scandals involving Nixon and the overreach of the CIA, it is likely that ideas about human rights were "in the air" in Washington, as Dr. Mary Stuckey wrote.[81] While other Presidents had also spoken of human rights, Carter went as far as establishing a Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in the state department.[82] For many Americans, the very concept of "human rights" started with Carter. Professor Randall Balmer

[79] Aronoff, 2006: 433.
[80] Winter et al, 2015.
[81] 2008: 14.
[82] Zelizer, 2010: 62.

told the author: "... before Carter and his presidency, 'human rights' was simply not a mainstream concern. He really introduced the term into the political lexicon."[83]

Carter spoke often about the need to restore morality to the government of the United States; a loaded term that may not have meant quite the same thing to him as to others. He spoke of Americans having been "embarrassed" by their government, and of what he saw as the loss of the "vision, the ideal, the commitment" of America's Founding Fathers.[84] For Carter, a focus on human rights was a way to make American policy more "moral", both abroad and at home, and, in so doing, give America a sense of moral leadership that would give it gravitas in its foreign affairs. By focusing on human rights, America would hold high a flame illuminating what was pure and decent and right and proper and would rally our citizens to a cause."[85]

Carter also addressed America's role in the international field of human rights. Assuming its importance to be a foregone conclusion, he declared human rights to be a US foreign policy objective.[86] Addressing the United Nations in 1977 he said: "The United States has a historic birthright to be associated with this process [of working towards a global understanding of fundamental human rights]."[87] Although a concise definition of "human rights" continued to be elusive, for Carter an essential aspect was that human rights "related to governmental respect for protection of an individual's person, beliefs, and spiritual practices."[88] In this context, Carter had already shown himself to live human rights as well as preach them; this southern former governor had consistently been in favour of racial equality,

[83] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.
[84] American Reference Library CD-ROM, Public Papers of the Presidents, Atlantic City, New Jersey, Remarks at a Democratic Party Campaign Luncheon, 20 September 1978: 1554.
[85] Op. cit., American Reference Library CD-ROM, Public Papers of the Presidents, Interview With the President, Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With a Group of Editors and News Directors, 15 July 1977, 1274.
[86] "Human Rights and Foreign Policy (1977)." Jimmy Carter, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, vol.1 (1977), 954.
[87] Balmer, 2008: 93.
[88] Stuckey, 2008: xxiv.

for instance.[89] He had been the only white man in his hometown to refuse to join the segregationist local White Citizen's Council, despite the fact that this had damaged his business.[90] As President, he continued to demonstrate commitment in this area, including agreeing to double the number of people enforcing civil rights laws, and ending discrimination in education at all levels.[91]

Although he had come from the South which, then as now, was not exactly known for progressivism in the area of human rights, Carter was a well-educated scientist who could appeal to many voters outside his own southern demographic.[92] He had promised to revitalise the declining American family by convening a series of White House conferences on the issue of family in order to bring this topic back to the forefront of his government's agenda.[93] He had also reached out to liberal, progressive groups, including gay rights activists, with assurances that his interest in human rights would extend to them. According to former Secretary of the State Madeleine Albright, Carter saw America's sense of moral purpose as all-important, making it very necessary to emphasise human rights: "It wasn't only a question of trying to do good; it was another way of reminding Americans of their true self-interest and of putting their country in a position of leadership on a matter vital to people everywhere."[94]

HOMOSEXUALITY AND GAY RIGHTS

Homosexuality can be defined as a primary sexual and affectional interest in members of the same sex as oneself. Homosexuality has been viewed and experienced in a range of ways throughout human history: There has been substantial documentation, for example, that

[89] Stuckey, 2008: 18.
[90] Aronoff, 2006: 436.
[91] Peterson (*The Washington Post*), 30 December 1977: A1. "Administration Agrees to Boost Rights Activities."
[92] Walz, 2007: 157.
[93] Moore, 1987: 164.
[94] Albright, 2006: 50.

same-sex unions existed in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, classical Greece, pre-Christian Rome, indigenous South and North American cultures and African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Vietnamese, Nepalese, Korean, Paleo-Siberian and Melanesian cultures.[95]

However, although there had been a degree of acceptance of homosexual unions in ancient Greece and Rome, the history of homosexuality in the west has chiefly been one of persecution.[96] Certainly, the history of Western Christianity was one in which at most times and in most place homosexuals have been severely penalised, up to and including execution.[97] This resulted in a situation whereby most homosexual activity remained strictly "closeted," inhibiting the development of any sort of coherent organisation representing the interests of homosexual people in the public arena. During the early modern period men could be prosecuted for the crime of sodomy, whereas sexual activity between women was not considered to be sex at all, resulting in lesbian relationships being both unrecognised and unpunished.[98] In Britain there was an established gay underground community by the late nineteenth century, with similar phenomena in other European countries.[99]

The debate about rights for homosexuals opened in 1864 when proposals to decriminalise homosexuality in the new German empire were opposed by Karl Ulrichs. Previously, the Napoleonic code had taken a much more lenient view. Ulrichs believed homosexuality a congenital disorder, and that homosexual men and women were individuals trapped in the wrong bodies and, therefore, expressing desires that were out of sync with their physical forms. Ulrichs' was, however, a minority voice.[100]

[95] Wilets, 1995: 22.
[96] Flippen, 2001: 34.
[97] Boswell, 2005.
[98] Adam, 1995: 4-5.
[99] Adam, 1995: 13.
[100] Allison, 2003: 101.

In the USA, the medical profession regarded homosexuality as a psychiatric and physical disorder, developing treatments that included removal of the gonads. New legislation in Germany promoted the imprisonment of homosexuals, often in mental institutions, and banned them from professional positions.[101] Whereas in other European nations, the bureaucracies of state had been founded in the distant past, before homosexuals were "discovered" by the medical professions in the nineteenth century, according to Professor of History Margot Canaday[102] the American state was still maturing and the engines of bureaucracy in the US, which were still being formed, incorporated contemporary attitudes towards homosexuality into the very structure of state.

The first movement founded to improve the civil rights of the gay community, the Order of Chaeronea, was based in Germany, and started in 1897.[103] It would run until 1933 when it was quashed under the Nazi administration. Nonetheless, it was hugely influential, inspiring similar groups after the Second World War.[104] Prior to this, while homosexuality was known in cultures all over the world, there was no discrete entity specifically dedicated to promoting the rights and aims of a gay "community," and indeed there was little concept of the same. Although all the evidence suggests that there was a thriving gay community in the United States, in the years before the Second World War only the medical establishment was seen as qualified to discuss what was considered a psychiatric and moral disorder. In the press, discussion of homosexuality was merely about "perversion" and its suspected link to a range of violent crimes.[105] Lesbians were possibly seen as less dangerous, but were also frequently considered to be mentally ill, and many found themselves confined in institutions.[106] There were, however, a few lone voices. In 1906 and 1907, the Scientific

[101] Adam, 1995: 17.
[102] 2009: 2.
[103] Adam, 1995: 1.
[104] Herzer and Steakley, 1986: 201.
[105] Adam, 1995: 42-3.
[106] Faderman, 1991: 133.

Humanitarian Committee lectured in New York, creating links with the German movement referenced above and, in 1915, anarchist Emma Goldman spoke out for freedom for homosexuals, citing as inspiration the lesbian women she had met in prison, among others.[107] Theirs were very much minority views.

The History of the Gay Rights Movement in the US

Historically, "laws, institutional policies, the shape of social life, and the cultural representation of love, romance, and sexual desire all presumed heterosexuality as normative."[108] In 1924 the first formal gay rights group was founded in Chicago, the Society for Human Rights.[109] The founder was Henry Gerber, a postal worker who had been based in Germany with US troops in the 1920s, and who had been active in the nascent German gay rights movement. The movement struggled from the start[110] and ended when police were alerted by the wife of one of its directors.[111] Also in the 1920s, communities of women who self-identified as lesbians had been established in diverse parts of the United States, including Salt Lake City.[112] The 1920s was also the time when both male and female homosexuals began to refer to themselves using the word "gay."[113]

Just when homosexuals were taking their first tentative steps towards asserting themselves, the evangelical right had crystallised around an idea of "the cause of orthodoxy as primarily a masculine endeavour." It was declared "manly" to follow Christ, the Bible was described as "virile literature" and Christ as "the most manly of men."[114] With each attempt to gain ground in the area of rights for homosexuals came a counter-attempt to quell the

[107] Katz, 1983: 366.
[108] D'Emilio, 2000: 47.
[109] Adam, 1995: 46.
[110] Cain, 1993: 155.
[111] Adam, 1995: 46.
[112] Faderman, 1991: 63.
[113] Faderman, 1991: 67.
[114] Lamberts, 1999: 39.

effort. Homosexual themes in films and books were either written out or prosecuted for obscenity.[115] Publicists and officials equated homosexuality with sexual crime, conflating homosexuals and predatory paedophiles. In 1943 an explicit ban on male and female homosexuals serving in the military was put into place. Over the years that followed, thousands of US army personnel were given dishonourable discharges for being homosexual, even if they had been decorated for heroism.[116] Four gay veterans with honourable discharges formed the Veterans' Benevolent Association in 1945 to fight for homosexual veterans. [117] However, there were internal disputes over the purpose of the Association[118] and it disbanded in 1954.[119]

After the Second World War, American homosexuals faced a new threat. "Manliness" was seen as essential to the fight against communism, and homosexual men were not seen as "manly", but as effeminate, weak, and dangerous to the integrity of the United States, and were associated with the "threat" of communism. According to Robert Dean, Professor of History at Eastern Washington University, "elite masculinity"[120] was central to the escalation of the Vietnam War, and views on masculinity during this period were hugely important in terms of American political culture and decision-making. Dean[121] sees profound links between anti-Communism and a hatred of homosexuality during this period, pointing out that government officials who were accused of holding Communist views were, just like homosexuals, depicted as being both subversive and weak. In this context, people who might otherwise have opposed military actions overseas, or hard-line anti-Communism at home, were afraid of speaking out in case they, too, were characterised as such. The evangelical

[115] Adam, 1995: 47.
[116] Ward and Calhoun-Brown, 2007: 342.
[117] Archer, 2004: 110.
[118] Licata and Petersen, 1982: 166.
[119] Nownes, 2004: 49; Katz, 1976: 635.
[120] 2001: 18.
[121] 2001: 3.

right tended to posit their version of Christianity as an important bulwark against communism in the context of the Cold War that occupied so much of the Americans' attention.[122]

As a result, when "Congress increased efforts to police communist sympathies… it also amended the immigration laws [in 1952] to expressly exclude homosexuals from the country."[123] In 1965, the legislation, which already referred to homosexuals as "psychopathic personalities", was amended to refer to them as living lives of "sexual deviation."[124] The same year, a poll revealed that Americans considered homosexuals the "third most dangerous group" in the United States, "after communists and atheists."[125] The idea that homosexuals were not just deviants but potentially a threat to national security was mooted.[126] In this context, heterosexual families that observed strict gender roles were promoted as not just the norm but the only way to be in a red-blooded, anti-communist society. Anyone who did not fit the mould was considered a dangerous anti-conformist[127] and some homosexual men and women married each other to deflect suspicion about their sexuality and prevent losing custody of their children.[128]

Police raids on gay bars and known gay "cruising" places to arrest men and women for "solicitation and loitering with the intent to commit the illegal act of sodomy" were commonplace. Although certain sexual acts were forbidden for everyone, the relevant legislation was designed to control homosexual behaviour, in the "best interests" of society.[129] Gay bars have been compared by one scholar to "churches;"[130] while this might be stretching the point, it is fair to say that for most homosexuals in this period, and the one that

[122] Wallace, 2013: 176.
[123] Johnson, 2004: 140.
[124] Johnson, 2004: 140.
[125] Pinello, 2003: 127.
[126] Johnson, 2004: 142.
[127] Winunwe, 2013: 11.
[128] Winunwe, 2013: 27.
[129] Bernstein, 2002: 540.
[130] Cartier, 2014.

followed, they were much more than just places to have a drink, but also served important roles in the formation of a common gay identity.

Gay Literature, Activism and Backlash

There was also a growing awareness of how common homosexuality was, especially following the publication in 1948 of the Kinsey Report.[131] Kinsey's research indicated that human sexuality was best represented as a continuum of sexual feelings and behaviour, and that many people had had at least some sexual experience with members of the same sex, while a full four percent of adult males reported that they were exclusively homosexual. While Kinsey's findings were challenged by some social scientists, they were still hugely shocking and revelatory to most American citizens.[132] In 1951, *The Homosexual in America* by Donald Webster Cory was published, making the then-audacious claim that gay men and lesbians should be seen as a legitimate minority that deserved consideration.[133]

The most important gay movement of the period following the Second World War was the Mattachine Society, founded in Los Angeles (as the Mattachine Foundation) in 1951 by Harry Hay.[134] The Mattachine Society, as it was known from 1953, proposed social and political change, challenged attacks on homosexuals,[135] and pledged to bring isolated homosexuals together; to educate both homo- and heterosexuals in a way that promoted "an ethical homosexual" culture, to provide leadership, and to assist those who suffered victimisation and oppression.[136] Its purposes were described as "to unify, to educate and to lead."[137] Initially, members were often terrified of exposure, but as time passed they grew

[131] Allison, 203: 210.
[132] Martin, 1996: 101.
[133] Cory, 1951.
[134] Hall, 2011: 27.
[135] Adam, 1995: 67.
[136] Allison, 2003: 112.
[137] Gosse, 2005: 40.

bolder and the organisation began to acquire a keener political focus.[138] The Mattachine Society drew direct inspiration from the efforts of other minorities in the US, such as the Jews. One of the founders, Chuck Rowland, recalled how they spoke about: "Why can't we do the same sort of things the Jews do? If you had five hundred thousand Jews in the community, they would have several Temples. They would have a symphony orchestra. They would have ballet. They would have several theatres. They would have a hospital. Why can't we do all those kinds of things?"[139]

In 1952, the American Congress had enacted the Immigration and Nationality Act, which included a clause to exclude people who presented as having "a psychopathic personality, sexual deviation, or a mental defect", which was generally understood to mean homosexuals.[140] In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower issued an executive order[141] that barred gay men and lesbians from holding federal positions. Eisenhower's order was in response to the charge that homosexual employees in the State Department were a security risk because they might be blackmailed, even if they were loyal.[142] In fact, the principal security risk was to the homosexual soldiers. For instance, in one case a lesbian woman in the army was raped by an intelligence officer to show her that men were "better"; he was never punished for this.[143]

In 1953 Dr. Evelyn Hooker was awarded a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to study gay men. The resulting paper claimed that homosexual men were just as well adjusted as heterosexual men, and sometimes even more so.[144] In 1955, the Daughters of

[138] D'Emilio, 1983: 67.
[139] Marcus, 1993: 34.
[140] Gay Right Advocates Memorandum to the United States Department of Justice and Acting Associate Attorney General John H Shenefield, 1980. File: Gay/Lesbians, (2/8/79-6/30/80), 02/08/1979 - 06/30/1980, Container 7. JCPL.
[141] An executive order is a direct and legally binding order from the President, the head of the executive branch of government, to the agencies of government, directing them as they execute laws or policies that have been established by Congress.
[142] Johnson, 2012: 123-4.
[143] Faderman, 1991: 153.
[144] Marcus, 1993: 24.

Bilitis, the first lesbian organisation since the war, was founded to provide education and a library to lesbians, to enable public discussion and advocate a way of behaving and dressing that would not alarm the wider society.[145] Inspired in part by the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis organised a monthly newsletter, meetings, and support for lesbians.[146] They immediately attracted opprobrium and suspicion, and were infiltrated by informants who fed information about the members to the FBI.[147]

The Supreme Court awarded the Mattachine Society the right to publish *One Magazine: The Homosexual Viewpoint* in 1958;[148] since 1954 it had been banned by the US Post Office, but the earlier ruling was found to have violated the free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment.[149] *One* had a strong political focus on homosexuals' need to be granted rights within the framework of America's principles of freedom.[150]

In 1961, Illinois became the first state to decriminalise homosexuality when it took place between consenting adults in private circumstances.[151] In 1964, Franklin Kameny, together with Jack Nichols, founded a chapter of the Mattachine Society in Washington, D.C. which called for "acceptance as full equals…. basic rights and equality as citizens; our human dignity… our right to the pursuit of happiness… right to love whom we wish"[152] and for the need "to secure for homosexuals the basic rights and liberties established by the world and the spirit of the Constitution of the United States."[153] Kameny was an academic and a veteran, having been fired from his military position because of his homosexuality.[154] At this time, the US was becoming increasingly urbanised. With denser populations, it was easier for

[145] Adam, 1995: 70.
[146] Hall, 2011: 28.
[147] Faderman, 1991: 149.
[148] Flippen, 2011: 35.
[149] Rimmerman, 2002: 21.
[150] Hall, 2011: 30.
[151] Adam, 1995: 75.
[152] Adam, 1995: 77.
[153] Hall, 2011: 31.
[154] Hall, 2011: 28.

gay people to find each other, and for gay communities to form.[155] With the emergence of a collective homosexual identity came the idea that homosexuals could be treated – and often despised – as a group, a collective, rather than as individuals.[156]

By the mid-1960s, gay rights groups in the USA were focusing on injustice, including the policy of issuing homosexual soldiers dishonourable discharges as a matter of course; aside from the stigma of the "dishonour" there were huge practical repercussions; pensions and other benefits were risked. The East Coast Homophile Organisation, a collective of gay rights groups in the East Coast, repeatedly requested the opportunity to discuss the matter with the relevant authorities, but were either turned down or ignored. On July 31, 1965 they held a protest at the Pentagon demanding equal rights for homosexual soldiers. The protest was extensively covered on the television network CBS[157] and is widely considered to be the very first gay political protest to be held in public.[158]

Mainstream opinion on homosexuality remained generally hostile. In 1966, an article in *Time* magazine, published on January 21, read that homosexuality: "… is a pathetic little second-rate substitute for reality, a pitiable flight from life. As such it deserves fairness, compassion, understanding when possible, treatment. But it deserves no encouragement, no glamorization, no rationalization, no fake status as minority martyrdom, no sophistry about simple differences in taste – and above all, no pretence that it is anything other than a pernicious sickness."[159]

In the late 1960s, police still routinely raided gay bars and one such raid took place in 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village in New York. The policemen's excessive violence led to a riot and the ensuing attention from the media led to the event becoming a

[155] Wald et al, 2007: 1158-60.
[156] Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 287.
[157] Hall, 2011: 32.
[158] Flippen, 2011: 35.
[159] Pinello, 2003: 127.

potent symbol of the victimisation of homosexuals.[160] Radical activists based in New York began organising, and a month after the incident about three hundred people gathered in Washington Square Park to declare a "homosexual revolution": Identifying with the Algerian revolutionaries fighting the French in the early 1960s and the Vietcong then fighting American forces in Vietnam, they organized themselves into the Gay Liberation Front (GLF).[161]

The first Gay Pride march was held in the anniversary of the raid.[162] Rapidly, the number of gay organisations in the US grew from fifty to over eight hundred, with many thousands of men and women becoming involved.[163] Gay rights organisations "initiated an important tactical shift" and began to devote attention less to direct action and more to the struggle for "access to the same polity gay rights opponents had dominated for so long."[164] This trend has been described as "density dependence," or the way that "at low densities" organised groups in a population with a particular set of interests strive to make themselves appear legitimate to other "political actors" with the result that the number of groups multiplies, leading to an increase in "density" and competition between the various groups.[165] From this period, much activism occurred within the institutional channels of the state. However, it has been noted that, despite the influence of the civil rights movement, gay rights (and women's rights) organisations tended to be very white-dominated, with little knowledge of or sensitivity to the issues facing those from ethnic minorities.[166]

Among the groups that existed at this time was the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA), which was based in New York, and which focused on direct protest actions to make the case

[160] Flippen, 2011: 36.
[161] Fejes, 2008: 33.
[162] Chambers and Polikoff, 1999: 524.
[163] Hall, 2010: 546; Nownes, 2004: 63.
[164] Werum and Winders, 2001: 386.
[165] Chamberlain, 2009: 657.
[166] Armstrong, 2002: 136-7.

for gay rights; for instance, activists would attend public events and embarrass public officials with loud demands for gay rights.[167] In 1971, the GAA launched a campaign to add "sexual orientation" to the list of protected categories in the human rights ordinance of New York,[168] from which a splinter group left to form the Lesbian Feminist Liberation group in 1973.[169] The GAA had been founded in 1969 by people previously involved in the GLF, with a focus on gay rights.[170] They included Jim Fouratt, one of the founders of the GLF.[171] Whereas the GLF, which had been born out of the frustration and upset following the Stonewall riots, had foundered over a lack of clarity about its role and aims, and because of the rampant sexism encountered by women activists, the GAA sought to present a united front and to use non-violent civil protest to further their aims.[172] The GAA "lobbied for fair employment and housing legislation, pushed for the repeal of sodomy laws, and sought an end to police harassment". The organisation also held an array of arts and cultural events, including "consciousness-raising" sessions. When the widely-read *Harper's Magazine* denounced homosexuality in 1970, members of the GAA occupied the offices and held a "tea party."[173]

The GAA had some breakthroughs with politicians. For instance, Democratic Representative Ed Koch, Republican Senator Charles Goodell, and his Democratic opponent Richard Ottinger all offered support in 1970.[174] In 1972, John Lindsay, Mayor of New York, "issued a directive designed to protect homosexuals against discrimination in municipal hiring and promotion practices and also announced he would work for passage of a wider antidiscrimination ordinance for New York City."[175] Ted Kennedy, then a senator, said in

[167] Gosse, 2005: 33.
[168] Bernstein, 1997: 544.
[169] Marcus, 1993: 266.
[170] Rimmerman, 2002: 25.
[171] Hall, 2011: 41.
[172] Rimmerman, 2002: 26.
[173] Hall, 2011: 41.
[174] Hall, 2011: 42.
[175] Hall, 2011: 42.

1971 that, if he were ever elected President, he would be willing to issue an executive order, if that was necessary, in order to ensure homosexuals' "basic rights."[176] By now, homosexuals were increasingly "out of the closet" and public displays of difference had become politicised.[177]

By now, too, increasing numbers of publishers, large and small, had started to publish books and magazines aimed squarely at the gay market.[178] The homosexual movement was steadily gaining a greater voice in the media. Following a police raid on a gay bar in Los Angeles in 1967, a newsletter was founded and initially distributed locally. By 1969, it was being distributed nationally under the name *The Advocate*.[179] The same year, Reverend Troy Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles, citing a need for a church that welcomed homosexuals rather than condemning them. Amongst other services, Reverend Perry provided marriages to gay couples, stating his belief that such unions were legal in the eyes of God, if not in civil law.[180] Perry had previously been excommunicated and told that God did not love him. After a suicide attempt and a religious experience, he had been inspired to found a church in which people could be both gay and Christian.[181]

The lesbian cause overlapped considerably with the more general feminist movement, with women demanding equal treatment and better representation in the worlds of work and politics. For some women their lesbianism was as much, or even more, about making a political statement than any natural affectional or sexual tendencies;[182] another step against male domination and the almost exclusively male establishment.[183] While some women felt

[176] Charles, 1971, in Bull, 1999: 40.
[177] Bernstein, 1997: 546.
[178] Hall, 2011: 42.
[179] Bull, 1999: XV.
[180] "A.B.T.", 1999: 9.
[181] Williams, 2003: 113.
[182] Faderman, 1991: 214.
[183] McBride-Stetson, 2004: 329.

that they had simply been born lesbian, for some others, their lesbianism needs to be understood in the context of their strong, political, feminist stance.[184]

Lesbians also had particular battles to fight in the areas of family law. Lesbian women raising children (who had often resulted from an earlier marriage to a man) faced considerable legal and social discrimination in a society in which it was assumed that families were heterosexual by definition.[185] Increasingly, lesbian and gay activists called for more than "just" their rights to be respected; the stance that society itself was the problem and that there was a need to rethink the very structure and nature of society became widespread. In their lesbianism, homosexual women were not just expressing their individual desires, but challenging the very idea of the traditional nuclear family and the society that had developed with this concept at its core. Professor Charlotte Bunch, an important gay rights activist at the time who also attended the 1977 White House meeting between Costanza and gay activists, wrote that, "To be Lesbian is to love oneself, Woman, in a culture that denigrates and despises women."[186]

Gay Rights Groups Organise

Despite the fact that the early- to mid-1970s witnessed a change in the views of homosexuality among certain sectors of the heterosexual community, homosexuals and organisations dedicated to supporting them were hampered by a number of practical issues. One area of importance at a time when gay rights activists were becoming increasingly organised, and ever more involved in focussed, targeted lobbying activities[187] was that of charitable status. Groups dedicated to supporting gay rights did not qualify for tax exemption status. Feeling that this was unfair, they started to petition for recognition as charities and

[184] Gitlin, 1995: 143
[185] Winunwe, 2013: 2-4
[186] Winunwe, 2013: 81
[187] Smith and Haider-Markel, 2002: 72.

entities that should qualify. For example, on November 13, 1972, the Gay People's Union approached the Internal Revenue with a request for exemption – which, of course, was not forthcoming. Gay rights charities and organisations would have to wait a considerable time to see changes in this area.[188]

The National Gay Task Force (NGTF), the largest and most prominent of all the gay rights groups, came into being in 1973 (initially largely composed of former members of the Gay Activist Alliance)[189] with the stated goals of creating legal and political change.[190] Members included Harold Brown, Martin Duberman, Ronald Gold, Franklin Kameny and Bruce Voeller.[191] In 1974 they were joined by Jean O'Leary, who would go on to play an enormous role in the NGTF, especially with respect to its relationship with the Carter administration.[192] The new organisation struggled with the knowledge that it was facing a major uphill battle.[193] The NGTF was a focused, disciplined organisation that had considerable success in obtaining commitments from a wide range of professional bodies and organisations that they would not discriminate against homosexuals. These included the American Anthropological Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even a number of religious bodies and individuals, albeit often with the caveat that their view was that homosexual behaviour is sinful.[194]

By 1973, the discourse about homosexuality in the areas of medicine and psychiatry had begun to change quite dramatically. Until now, the advice given to those who experienced homosexual feelings was often that they should consult a psychiatrist or

[188] Application for Recognition of Exemption from the Gay People's Union to Internal Revenue, Number 13, 1972. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Records (cited hereafter as NGTF records), Box 144. Folder 25, Cornell University (cited hereafter as CU).
[189] Rimmerman, 2002: 27.
[190] Bernstein, 2002: 549.
[191] Rimmerman, 2000: 62.
[192] Marcus, 1993: 261.
[193] Williams, W, 2003: 130.
[194] NGTF Gay Rights Support Statements and Resolutions Packet. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.

psychologist.[195] Twenty years after Hooker's research, it seemed that the medical professions were finally taking notice. Most importantly, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders, giving rise to a series of jokes about the "instant cure". They invited members of the NGTF, among others, to attend the press conference that was held to announce the decision.[196] Homosexual activists, including O'Leary, greeted the decision of the APA by noting that the change of classification was a historic step, while also stating that "the APA was simply recognising what many gays have known all along – that gays can be as happy and healthy as anybody."[197]

In 1974, overt homosexual and activist Harvey Milk ran for the position of city supervisor in San Francisco. He espoused social liberalism and the separation of government from personal sexual issues. Although Milk finished 10th of 32 candidates, he won a lot of attention for his campaign and was a charismatic, sympathetic figure around whom gay activists rallied.[198] He would get in on his next attempt.

By this point, there were movements dedicated to gay liberation in every major city and on every major university campus across the United States.[199] Between 1972 and 1976 twenty-nine cities and counties, often liberal college towns, introduced legislation and policies intended to protect homosexuals from discrimination, frequently after a local gay rights organisation had approached the city council with a request.[200] In 1975, a petition was presented to the White House under President Ford entitled "Petition for Sanity" which requested freedom for sexual choice and had been prepared by a number of prominent

[195] Williams, 2013: 104.
[196] *It is Time*, NGTF Newsletter, "Our Past and Future." NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.
[197] *The Advocate*, 16 January 1974. Box 148, Folder 56, CU.
[198] Gregory-Lewis (*The Advocate*), 7 April 1976. "Milk Gets Canned but Keeps on Running". NGTF records, Box 148, Folder 56, CU.
[199] Adam, 1995: 89.
[200] Fejes, 2008: 53-4.

women in the lesbian and feminist rights movements, including O'Leary and Gloria Steinem.[201]

Connecticut, Colorado, Oregon, Delaware, Hawaii, North Dakota and Ohio all repealed their laws against sodomy between 1971 and 1974 and Massachusetts, while leaving a probation against "unnatural and lascivious acts" on the books, ruled that the act did not apply to private behaviour among consenting adults.[202] However, in Colorado the same year, a "bitterly divisive referendum overturned a newly passed non-discrimination ordinance that included protection for sexual orientation." It is worth noting that this bitterly contested referendum took place even without much organised political manoeuvring from the anti-gay lobby and attracted relatively little attention around the country.[203]

In 1974, Bella Abzug,[204] a member of the House of Representatives from New York, introduced the first gay rights bill to Congress,[205] seeking an amendment to the Civil Rights Act to include a specific reference to homosexuals.[206] Abzug was an important political figure, a well-known feminist,[207] and a lawyer who had been involved in left wing politics since her student days,[208] as well as the mother of a gay woman.[209] The "Equality Act of 1974" would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, sex, and marital status. However, Abzug's bill did not cover the issue of employment rights, which gay activists considered one of the most important and pressing areas of concern. Consequently, representatives of the NGTF and other gay rights activists met Abzug and asked her to

[201] Petition for Sanity, Ms Magazine, 9 February 1975. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[202] Flippen, 2011: 35.
[203] Stone, 2012: 13.
[204] Bella Abzug was a major figurehead of the feminist movement and an important ally for gay rights activists.
[205] Williams, 2010: 146.
[206] Rodgers, 1998: 1145.
[207] Howe, 1998: 271.
[208] http://www.jofreeman.com/reviews/abzug.html
[209] Smith and Haider-Markel, 2002: 191.

introduce a new bill that would include the issue of employment, as well as seeking sponsorship of the bill nationwide and holding a press conference to introduce it.[210]

Three months after her meeting with gay rights activists, the bill included a clause about employment which utilised the phrase "affectional or sexual preference," at their suggestion, like the Civil Rights Amendment of 1975,[211] to underline the fact that homosexuality was not just about sexual activity. In this, Abzug was joined by four Congressmen; three Democrats, John Burton, Edward Koch and R.N. Nix, and a Republican, Pete McCloskey. Jerry Falwell, a prominent Southern Baptist pastor and televangelist, reacted by remarking that, "our government seems determined to legalize homosexuals as a legitimate 'minority.'"[212] The bill did not pass and would continue to be presented to Congress throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Falwell continued to posit homosexuality as not just a symptom but a cause of America's decline, and suggested that, in part because of relaxing views on morality, "nations and terrorists" were thumbing their noses at "this once proud land."[213]

The NGTF commented in their own review of the first two and a half years of their existence that one of the welcome surprises resulting from their lobbying work in Washington was the fact that there were already so many homosexual people working in government. While there remained considerable opposition to rights for homosexual Americans among the general public and in Congress, the NGTF and their colleagues were also heartened by positive responses to their lobbying work, including some support from otherwise very conservative politicians.[214] In 1975, the NGTF requested and received assurances from a range of private employers, including IBM, Proctor and Gamble, Avon,

[210] Eaklor, 2008: 156.
[211] Eaklor, 2008: 156.
[212] Eaklor, 2008: 156.
[213] Wuthnow, 1983: 179.
[214] *It is Time.* NGTF Newsletter. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.

McDonald's, Honeywell, American Airlines, Eastern Airlines, Citicorp, CBS and Bank of America, that they did not discriminate against homosexual employees.[215] Also in 1975, activists in Ypsilanti, Michigan, sponsored an initiative to establish a city non-discrimination ordinance to include sexual orientation. After a well-covered campaign in the State, this was defeated by a margin of 64-36.[216]

Coming in the wake of the major push in the area of civil rights for blacks (by the mid-1970s many rights had been won but the battle was still ongoing), gay rights activists often explicitly compared themselves to racial minorities and, by extension, the battle for gay rights to the long struggle and painfully-won rights finally awarded to Black Americans. Gay Americans had started tending to cluster in particular parts of urban areas, forming "territories" and essentially mimicking the composition and structure of ethnic groups.[217] Although "homophile" organisations had been around for several decades, only now did they start to acquire a more sophisticated political edge, and the sense of gay people as a discrete community that could and should campaign for greater rights, just as Black people had done.[218] For example, an article in the *Milwaukee Journal* titled *"A Different Drummer"* stated that: "… the people of the gay community have developed their own lifestyle. We have common friends and common goals; we share the experience of persecution by straights. We have our own language and our own history; like Black history it has been suppressed by historians unfriendly to homosexuals."[219]

The gay movement borrowed much of the language of the civil rights movement, as we can see in terms such as "gay is good" (which has echoes of "black is beautiful") and "gay power;"[220] the term was coined by Frank Kameny, an important gay rights activist who

[215] NGTG statements 3. National Gay Task Force Back-Up Material (n.d.) (O/A 4499), Container 27. JCPL.
[216] Stone, 2012: 48.
[217] Oldfield, 1996: 142.
[218] Denby, 2015: 132.
[219] Stimac, 1975.
[220] Denby, 2015: 132.

sought a new way of seeing homosexuality.[221] Whereas it was true that civil rights movements had recently secured an improvement in the civil rights status of African Americans, it was also true that many African Americans tended to be religiously conservative, and in fact part of Carter's courtship of the evangelical vote had involved reaching out to African American evangelicals.[222] Evangelical Blacks were no more likely than their White equivalents to be favourably inclined towards the gay rights movement.[223] Moreover, activist groups including feminists and gay rights organisations faced criticism for often being dominated by white, university-educated women and men, and therefore for a lack of insight into what Black and other minority Americans had to deal with,[224] and many feminist and gay rights organisations really only started to properly think about and address issues associated with racial identity in the 1980s.[225]

Some progress was being made. In 1975, for example, an organisation dedicated to providing legal support to lesbian women in domestic disputes[226] was granted charitable status along with a host of tax benefits. This was done "on the understanding that none of your educational activities are designed to proselytise or influence another's sexual orientation."[227]

One effect of the gay rights laws that were beginning to appear on the books around the country was that ordinary Americans became increasingly aware of the problems that

[221] Denby, 2015: 134.
[222] Flippen, 2011: 249.
[223] This is a debate that continues. In 2008, for example, an African American journalist wrote that: "They [Civil Rights activists] feel gays and lesbians are hijacking their movement, even if they recognize there has been real suffering experienced by many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. They simply feel that the comparison is totally unfair, also pointing out that the financial situation of the average gay or lesbian in America today is far better than the average situation of an African-American during the days of segregation (or even today, for that matter)" (Brown, 2008).
[224] Burgin, 2013: 159.
[225] Burgin, 2013: 163-5.
[226] "… custody cases involving a homosexual parent first began appearing with some frequency in the early and mid-1970s, as the women's liberation movement and changing attitudes towards divorce made it easier for all women to leave marriages and as the gay liberation movement enabled substantial numbers of gay men and lesbians to embrace an identity they had earlier been taught to despise" (Chambers and Polikoff, 1999: 532).
[227] Jeanne S. Gessay on the Lesbian Mothers' National Defence Fund request to the URS for exemption under tax code 501 (c) (3). 17 November 1975. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 25, CU.

homosexuals faced – and of the prevalence of homosexuality in American society. Crimes that might once have been "brushed under the carpet" because of the implied shame for the victim concerned, and for his or her family, were now a matter of public discussion. Individuals who would once have entered heterosexual marriages and/or kept their sexual preferences secret for life were increasingly "coming out of the closet" and demanding access to the same basic human rights that could be taken for granted by heterosexuals. Another effect of the increasing visibility of the homosexual community was a rise in violence against its members. For example, in June 1976 four teenagers who had gone out one evening explicitly "to hassle gays" attacked and murdered a twenty-one-year-old gay man outside a bar in Tucson, Arizona. They were found guilty of manslaughter and given probation by a local judge, leading to public outrage and, in February 1977, the approval of a comprehensive non-discrimination ordinance.[228]

Overt violence against homosexuals soared in the 1970s as conservative forces reacted to their greater visibility and levels of political organisation. In Oklahoma a KKK chapter was founded with the purpose of assaulting homosexuals and at the University of Oklahoma many students donned t-shirts with anti-gay slogans such as "Do the World a Favour – Shoot a Faggot". Violence also soared in relatively liberal New York, including numerous episodes of arson in which bars and other establishments frequented by homosexuals were targeted.[229]

While this fight and fight-back were ongoing, the vocabulary of human rights had become very much part of the gay rights struggle. In line with the increasing usage of the term, particularly by Carter, gay rights activists tended to posit gay rights as human rights, and therefore as a matter of interest and concern to anyone interested in human rights

[228] Fejes, 2008: 56.
[229] Rimmerman, 2002: 125.

generally. The words "human rights" now frequently featured in the speeches of activists such as San Francisco political and gay rights activist Milk.[230]

EVANGELICAL RIGHT AND THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

There are many variations of evangelicalism, although just about all evangelicals agree that they are "gospel people"; that is, the New Testament of the Bible is their primary source of information about what to believe and how to behave.[231] Evangelicals, seeking to remain faithful to conservative tradition, adhere to: belief in the Bible as the literal Word of God; belief in the divinity of Christ, and the belief that Christ's life, death and resurrection are effective in the salvation of men's souls. Oriented towards spiritual salvation, evangelicals consider it their duty to convert non-believers to their beliefs. An evangelical is one who "has had a born again conversion, accepts Jesus as his or her personal Saviour, believes the Scriptures are the authority for all doctrine, and feels an urgent duty to spread the faith."[232]

According to K.L. Woodward of *Newsweek*,[233] an evangelical is one who believes his relationship with God is utterly personal and who attempts to follow his/her life in compliance with a strict moral code. Although evangelicals can belong to one of a range of denominations, they all believe in the Bible, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the church. Evangelicalism also promotes the idea of embracing a personal relationship with God through the concept of being born again. Moreover, evangelicalism goes beyond a set of beliefs, as it also represents a unique social movement and an all-encompassing identity.[234] One of the most distinguishing characteristics of evangelicalism is the promotion of individualism, allowing very different ways of acting on one's faith. However, as believers in the New

[230] Moyn, 2010: 174.
[231] Sweeney, 2005: 17; George, 1999: 62.
[232] Gallup, 2005; Sweeney, 2005: 17.
[233] Woodward (*Newsweek*), 25 October 1976: 68-78. "Born Again."
[234] Lindsay, 2007: 4.

Testament, evangelicals believe that they are also responsible for working and caring for society as a whole.[235]

The History of the Evangelical Right in the US until the 1970s

The evangelical right has often posited itself "as American as apple pie"; an accurate description. Although right wing American evangelism has roots in the European Reformation, in the United States it has taken on a unique form. Spiritually, and sometimes as a matter of historical fact, members of the evangelical right in America are descended from European Protestants who fled to the "new world" for the religious freedom they could not find at home. As a result, their brand of Christianity had a major impact on the development of American society and culture, including a belief in America as populated by "a chosen people" – borrowing mythological themes from the Old Testament. American nationalism became intertwined with faith. In the words of Marshall and Manuel: "The Pilgrims and Puritans had believed that God had intended America for their age, a land where He had called a newly chosen people to settle and provide a living example of the life to which He had called all men. America was to be a "city set on a hill" and a light to the rest of the world. Their children carried this idea of God's call even further: America was to be an asylum for the oppressed and a spiritual generator that would power the spread of Christianity and democracy all over the globe."[236]

Most scholars researching the evangelical right have categorised it as a movement which "seeks to impose its religious convictions on America and to replace a secular state with an evangelical authoritarianism."[237] Others, including Green[238] consider it to be "a social movement dedicated to restoring traditional values in public policy." The evangelical right

[235] Ellison and Sherkat, 1993: 5, 8, 131-44.
[236] Marshall and Manuel, 1986: 368.
[237] Durham, 2000: 105.
[238] 1996: 1-2.

has been referred to variously in the literature, and the term "Christian Right" is probably the most often used,[239] along with "New Right", which was coined in 1974.[240]

The term I will use by default throughout this work is "evangelical right" because of the specifically evangelical Protestant nature of most of the right wing activists in this movement. Furthermore, while members of various ethnic minorities, notably African Americans, often also espoused evangelical beliefs, the evangelical right movement was predominately white.[241] This cohort was exceptional in forming and maintaining a relatively stable, cohesive political grouping and agenda. We can also clearly identify this movement as right as its stated goals were (and remain) "to maintain structures of order, status, honour, or traditional social differences or values."[242]

Writing in 1982, Professor C.Y.H. Lo[243] described this group as "contrasting itself with nonbelievers and sinners, such as homosexuals, feminists, and Congressional representatives with 'immoral' voting records." Although this is a group that became an important lobbying force in the 1970s, its roots lie deep in American history.[244] The evangelical right promotes a conservative social agenda based on religious values among key constituencies and has become one of the major influences in the US culture wars.[245] The promotion of Judeo-Christian values in public life has traditionally been the goal of the evangelical right, so issues focussing on the family, abortion, gay rights, feminism, prayer at school, and home schooling have historically formed the centrepiece of its activism. As early as 1951 one observer wrote that: "There is no sign that the churches are withdrawing from the

[239] Watson, 1997: 187.
[240] Watson, 1997: 191.
[241] Alumkal, 2004: 196.
[242] Lo, 1982: 108.
[243] 1982: 126.
[244] Chapp, 2012: 18-19.
[245] Butler, 2006: 12.

ranks of political protagonists; on the contrary, their participation is increasing, and cautiously, but with assurance, they are learning to play new roles".[246]

While the evangelical right was not an exclusively southern, or exclusively white, phenomenon, it was particularly strong among white southern Protestants, who had seen their culture come under attack during the civil rights movement. Many were very anxious about the dramatic social changes they saw happening around them.[247] Moves to revise housing and education policies, along with suspicions that "Black" values were being promoted while "White" values were denigrated by supposedly radical intellectuals, created what has been described as "terror" in this section of society.[248] All of this fed into the attraction of right wing evangelical churches and organisations that appeared to uphold "traditional values," as did the liberalisation of sexual mores, legalized abortion, the increasing use of sexuality in marketing and advertising, and the appearance of open homosexuality, which some sincerely believed to be a sign that the end of the world was nigh.[249]

As well as holding specific views about religion and faith, the evangelical right was (and remains) characterised by very specific views about gender roles and family, specifically that men should be "strong" and provide for their families, that women should submit to their husbands and, ideally, be financially dependent on them, while children should be obedient. Men are typically seen as "rational" and women "emotional." There is no room in this vision for figures such as the sexually liberal woman or the homosexual man. In the context of this worldview, homosexuality is conflated with a blurring of gender roles, and considered highly detrimental to society, sinful,[250] and a threat to the family.[251] Feminism is often conflated with lesbianism. Falwell stated that feminists were pro-homosexual and lesbian, and often

[246] Ebersole, 1951: 176.
[247] Phillips, 1969, 25: 33; 37.
[248] Bellah, 1992: 105-6.
[249] Lieven, 2005: 142.
[250] Lienesch, 1993: 53-60.
[251] Cox, 2005: 25.

lesbian themselves,[252] and many of the evangelical right were anxious about the message promulgated by the gay rights movement that sex for fun could be an end in itself; this message has implications that went beyond the gay community.[253] In general, the view that homosexuality is a real and present danger is widely disseminated. The evangelical right also tends to be politicised; many studies demonstrate that fundamentalist religious beliefs and traditional moral values are strong predictors of support for and/or participation in Christian Right organizations.[254]

The 19th century saw economic opportunity and prosperity which attracted large numbers of immigrants, most of whom did not share the conservative Protestantism of America's founders. In response, organisations such as the KKK sought to reassert Protestant authority.[255] As the 19th century progressed, some right wing Protestants fought back against rapid scientific and technological progress by asserting Biblical literalism and denying evolution and other scientific breakthroughs.[256] While some Protestants broke away and adhered to interpretations of Christianity that were not at odds with the new discoveries, some embraced fundamentalism and denounced others as heretics.[257] In response, some states passed laws that made it illegal to teach any theory that appeared to contradict the Bible, such as the Theory of Evolution.[258]

In 1925, fundamentalists suffered a major setback with the Scopes Trial, which focussed on teaching evolution in school. A Tennessee court found a teacher, John Scopes, guilty of teaching evolution. Despite their win, the resulting media frenzy was a huge embarrassment for the evangelical right, forcing it to retreat from public view.[259] In fact,

[252] Lienesch, 1993: 72.
[253] Shepard, 2010: 182.
[254] Burris, 2001: 34.
[255] Oldfield, 1996: 18.
[256] Hunter, 1983: 27-9.
[257] Mead, 2006: 2.
[258] Brinkley and Fitzpatrick, 1997: 226.
[259] William, 1996: 6.

some commentators at the time predicted the end of fundamentalism.[260] Nonetheless, slowly over the following years, in some areas the evangelical right gained ground, with growing numbers of private schools and colleges, newspapers and other publications. At the same time, there was growing activity at grassroots and organisational level, as well as infiltration of new, popular forms of media, such as radio.[261]

In the economic upturn that followed the Second World War, city suburbs received increasing numbers of middle-class white Americans. Their churches took into account the increasing secularism of US life, offering many opportunities to socialise and affirm group identity as well as to worship. In the context of this proud, confident, and prosperous group, religion and patriotism (often expressed around anti-communist sentiments) became inextricably interlinked.[262] By the 1950s, the Cold War was ongoing. The evangelical right saw this as a threat to them and to the United States generally, and tended to conflate political and religious views in their discussions of it. Some preachers even suggested that the Cold War was a precursor to the "end times," while some devoted their time to urging Christian missionaries to bring their evangelical message to the rest of the world, and especially to communist countries. [263]

By the 1960s, the evangelical right felt under siege. In 1962, a Supreme Court ruling stated that praying and reading the Bible in public school flouted the separation of Church and State. In 1965, changes to the immigration law meant that the ethnic and religious composition of the United States began to change.[264] In 1972, Congress proposed and approved the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which would prohibit sexual discrimination by state and federal government. Two Supreme Court decisions – the banning of public

[260] Wilcox and Larson, 2007: 165.
[261] Carpenter, 1980: 68-70.
[262] Steding, 2014: 18-9.
[263] Lahr, 2005: 282.
[264] Balmer, 2008: 105.

school prayer in 1962 and the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, which legalised abortion under certain conditions were major factors in the formation of an organised evangelical right.[265] This, together with "the duplicity of Watergate, the disgrace of America's defeat in Vietnam, the waning of patriotic anticommunism, the gay rights movement…" all helped the right wing rally.[266] They responded with a series of actions intended to defend "traditional" Christian values.[267]

Concerned by social liberalisation and talk of rights for homosexuals, right-wing religious interest groups crystallised around prominent figures such as Phyllis Schlafly, who took a "pro-family" and strongly anti-feminist stance.[268] In 1972, Schlafly had formed a group called Stop ERA, referring to the amendment that prohibited sexual discrimination by state and federal government, and that appeared to be on course towards achieving constitutional status.[269] Schlafly claimed that, as well as removing men's obligation to provide for their families, forcing women into the workforce and children into day care centres, on top of giving homosexual unions unwarranted recognition, "it legalized homosexual marriage and required government to pay for abortions"[270] and it would give homosexual "perverts" the right to get married.[271] At the same time, spontaneous social changes such as the drug culture, free love and gay rights[272] further angered younger evangelicals and led to a surge of activism during the 1970s. This in turn paved the way for a rapid growth in the number of Christian bookstores, publications, and TV and radio shows.[273]

The period immediately before Carter's presidency was a time of rapid growth of interest in evangelism. During the 1950s, the number of church members in America grew

[265] Diamond, 1998: 63.
[266] Wilentz, 1996 (orig. 1990): 171.
[267] Wald, 2003: 205-6.
[268] Flippen, 2011: 87.
[269] Ward and Calhoun-Brown, 2007: 212.
[270] Collins, 2012: 99.
[271] Kalman, 2010: 72.
[272] Collins, 2012.
[273] Diamond, 1998: 22; Wilcox, 1992: 11.

from 64.5 million to 114.5 million, and by 1960, more than 60% of Americans belonged to a church. By the 1970s, growing numbers were learning towards the right, and the evangelical right had begun to emerge.[274] Historically, evangelicals have been good at tapping into prevailing moods.[275]

Many more liberal Christians felt greatly hurt by the perceived hi-jacking by extreme right wing elements of the term "Christian." Professor Randal Balmer, historian of American religion, himself a self-described "follower of Jesus," told the author that he found the identification of the right wing with Christianity "deeply offensive," adding, "I find very little that I would identify as 'Christian' in the Religious Right."[276] While there are some prominent exceptions, such as Schlafly, who was a Catholic, in general terms the evangelical and Protestant nature of the movement is a significant element, alongside its right wing agenda and interest in "traditional family values."

The Evangelical Left

A key focus of ours is on the evangelical right, which was the dominant voice against gay rights. However, the evangelical left was also evolving at this time and, while generally less vocal and politicised than the evangelical right (a "minority voice", as it has been described)[277] it also had much to say about the cultural shifts occurring in America at this time, including the growing visibility of homosexuality. Professor Randal Balmer told the author that it is "important to recall that, in the early and mid-1970s, there was a remarkable recrudescence of progressive evangelicalism (Jim Wallis, Ron Sider, John Perkins, et al.), as

[274] Sweeney, 2005: 199.
[275] Urofsky and May, 1996: xx; Balmer, 2010: 893.
[276] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.
[277] Harrrington Watt, 1991: 49.

demonstrated in the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern. Carter, in part, rode this current of progressive evangelicalism to the White House."[278]

Upset by changes in society and recent events, including the Vietnam War, religious thinkers in this camp combined piety and theology with broadly left-wing ideas, particularly in the areas of civil rights (which they supported) and capital punishment (which they opposed), while standing against violence, including left wing violence.[279] They spoke out against elements in the white evangelical church who appeared to be indifferent to (or even in favour of) economic disparity, racism, sexism, and militarism.[280] Left wing evangelicals believed that the message of the Gospel could, if properly applied, relieve most of the problems facing America. Racists would learn not to be racists, and the inhabitants of Black ghettos would become more disciplined, helping them to ameliorate their situation.[281] The evangelical left identified strongly with the civil rights movement, with liberal white pastors marching alongside important Black leaders such as Martin Luther King, and with pacifism, with many on the evangelical left taking a stance against the Vietnam War.[282] Religious figures had contributed greatly to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.[283]

By the mid-1970s, within the Evangelical Left could be found a number of pro-gay religious organisations, the first of which, the UCC (United Church of Christ) Gay Caucus, was founded in 1972. Throughout the 1970s, pro-gay religious groups focussed on supporting homosexuals within their denominations,[284] and gay activist groups emerged among

[278] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.
[279] Swartz, 2012: 4.
[280] Schafer, 2011: 76.
[281] Swartz, 2012: 39.
[282] Wilson, 2007: 11-2.
[283] Steding, 2014: 20.
[284] Djupe and Olson, 2003: 266.

denominations including the Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Quakers, American Baptists, Pentecostals, Unitarians, and members of the United Church of Christ.[285]

Noteworthy members of the evangelical left include Tony Campolo, "speaker, author, sociologist, pastor, social activist and passionate follower of Jesus,"[286] Troy Perry, founder pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church and, although he might not have characterised himself as such, Jimmy Carter. Many of the messages espoused by the left wing evangelicals are similar to the views expressed by Carter, before, during and after his presidency.[287] However, Carter was often criticised by those on the evangelical left for being too bogged down in establishment politics and not taking sufficient action on issues including equality for women and poverty.[288] Campolo told the author that "Carter was hardly a member of the left wing of the Democratic Party, and there was no such thing as an Evangelical Left in the 1970s. At least, it was not recognized as such. The Evangelical Left came into being as a reaction to the emergence of the Religious Right."[289]

[285] Hunter, 1991: 91.
[286] www.tonycampolo.org
[287] Swartz, 2012: 168.
[288] Swartz, 2012: 222.
[289] Tony Campolo in a personal interview, 30 April 2014.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL CONTEXT: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INTEREST GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the theoretical background to the thesis, and in particular social movement theory, which provides concepts that inform and enlighten the discussion about the gay rights movement under Carter and the evangelical right in its role as a countermovement. Various theoretical positions, including Public choice theory, Queer theory, Foucauldian discourse analysis, Decision theory, Rights theory, and Social movement theory were considered for this thesis. Following an examination of all these candidate theories, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that the theoretical approach most suitable to guide and inform this study was social movement theory, with elements of interest group theory. The researcher came to believe that the social movement approach would enlighten the subject better than any of the others mentioned above, as the research deals with two major social movements, the gay rights movement and the evangelical right. Although some of the above-mentioned theories are relevant to aspects of the material under discussion here, they fail to fully shed light on all its components. The researcher has therefore determined that it would be most appropriate to use a theory that is relevant to all components of the study, rather than to use two unrelated theories.

General Approaches Towards the Study of Politics

The principal division within political studies is between normative and empirical.[290] My main interest is how President Carter responded to the attempts of various opposing pressure groups to influence his policies on gay rights; the president being a significant figurehead and agenda-setter, and therefore important from the point of view of making an issue (gay rights) into a valid political issue. Presidents are not just there to keep the status quo going: they sometimes create new things and they may do that because they have been prodded towards it by pressure groups. As this happened with Carter, what is important to my topic is not only

[290] Bicchieri, 2005: 8-55.

his policies and the decisions he made, but also his rhetoric; for example, his admission of the issue of gay rights into the political debate. This is most usefully discussed within both the organisational dimension and the cultural framing dimension of social movement theory. What I am contributing is a concrete and fully detailed account of how these organisational resources were deployed, what the responses were, how the cultural framing was achieved, and what the participants thought about that cultural framing. The importance of this approach is confirmed by several prominent gay rights activists, who said that Carter had helped with cultural framing. We will see the participants' awareness of the cultural framing task and the cultural framing achievements of their activities vis-à-vis Carter, and then Carter's response and his contribution.

Normative Approach

In political science, the normative approach is that which deals with how the world *ought to be*; in contrast to the empirical approach, which deals with how it actually *is*. The normative approach is about the understanding of political theory, and aims to define such ideas as human rights, liberty, equality, justice, democracy, and peace.[291] An issue discussed in this thesis is human rights. However, this thesis is not about rights. It is a political dissertation about the political process, and is not about the ontological status of various terms in political theory; therefore it will begin by taking rights for granted. This is an exercise in descriptive political science and, as such, it will not need to answer those conceptual questions that are already settled *a priori*; therefore the issue of what rights are does not arise. Thus, I will not be discussing the theory of rights.[292] The people who I am dealing with already have a clear idea about what rights are, and their idea is what I will be working with.

[291] Bicchieri, 2005: 8-55.

[292] Human Rights theory is neither simple nor straightforward. Despite the apparent simplicity of the idea that rights can belong to human beings simply by virtue of the fact that they are human – that, as Professor Jack Donnelly puts it, human rights are "the rights that one has because one is human" (Donnelly 2003: 7) – the concept is a contested one. Scholars are divided over many aspects of the theory of human rights, including the question of whether universal rights exist at all. Theorists disagree not only over the definition of human rights, but over whether they even can be defined (Cornwall and Molyneux 2006; Parisi 2010). A right may be regarded as an interest (Raz, J. (1984) *On the Nature of Rights*. 194-214), a claim (Feinberg, J. 1980) *The Nature and Value of Rights*. pp: 149), a choice (Hart, H.L.A. (1955) *Are There Any Natural Rights*. 175-191) or a trump (Waldron, J. (1984) *Rights as Trumps*: 153-167); as something that belongs to people (Hart 1955: 182); or in the words of Joel Feinberg, Professor of Philosophy and Law, as a "simple, undefinable, unanalyzable primitive" (Feinberg, 1980: 149).
To analyse how human rights discourse is employed by the politically marginalised, like homosexuals, who are often the most strident in their articulation of their rights, Professors Charlotte Bunch and Elizabeth Friedman, feminists and lesbian rights activists, constructed the idea of "rights enjoyment." However, since this theory is one of activism and requires actors (both state and non-state) to practice it, it is incomplete without a theory of

Discourse Theory

As with much of political science, my thesis is an observational, descriptive, empirical discussion, in common with much of political science. However it is not a purely descriptive thesis; there are also explanatory elements to it, relating it to an existing theoretical literature within analytical political science or analytical political sociology. Among the various analytic and theoretical frameworks that could have been adopted, a very plausible one was the critical theory that is built into Foucauldian discourse analysis, which deals with homosexuality and discourse. Foucault's theory of discourse aims to analyse categorisations, ideology, relationships (personal and institutional) and politics; and to thereby learn how individuals see the world through looking at societal power relationships as viewed through both language and practices.[293] In 1978, in his landmark work *History of Sexuality*, Foucault argued that sexuality is constructed through institutional discourses, or "regimes of truth". Knowledge about sexuality constitutes sexuality itself rather than being a window onto it: sexuality is the product of the discourse about it. For example, heterosexual monogamy became the norm thanks to the "discursive explosion" of the Victorian era, in which sexuality came to be central to identity, and those who deviated from the norm began to see themselves as persons with distinct "natures". Foucault called into question the very idea of a permanent "essence" to homosexuality, and indeed to sexuality in general; the differences between same-sex relationships in different historical periods may be too wide to allow for any continuous history in this area.[294]

Foucault argued that movements based on affirmation of lesbian and gay identity risked merely reinforcing the existing discourse; but this suggestion has been largely ignored by contemporary activists.[295] Foucault also argued that it is possible to contest the prevailing discourse of a time: discourse can undermine and expose power, as well as producing, transmitting and reinforcing it. Discourse constitutes reality rather than reflecting it, and the world contains many different discursive elements rather than there being a simple division in

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change to identify the foundations for such activism (Bunch 1995; Friedman 1995). Moreover, human rights understood in this way may seem impossible to fulfil, at least without the commitment of a strong state. Nor can this model give guidance on how rights-supporting organisations should act to connect people's struggles. Professor Donnelly concluded from his detailed analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of human rights that while as yet there is no "comprehensive and normative theory of human rights … we must continue to strive for greater theoretical rigour" (Donnelly, 1989: 43-45).

[293] Foucault, 1988: 38.

[294] Stein and Plummer, 1994: 183; Welch, 2013: 95-96.

[295] Seidman, 1994: 171.

discourse between the acceptable/dominant and the dominated/excluded. He wrote about this in the context of homosexuality:

"There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality… made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or naturality be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified."[296]

Although Foucault's theory of discourse is often employed by scholars in examining homosexuality, it could not have been of much use for the purposes of this study. Foucault's approach is an attempt to change and reconstruct discourse, or at least to open it out and make it more plural. However, generic concepts like heteronormativity[297] – or other Foucauldian ideas, like episteme[298] – are not methodologically relevant for my study, as its purpose is not critique but rather the exploration of a forgotten piece of history. Foucault himself claims to want to leave a space for resistance, but the whole thrust of his work is away from that. Although Foucault is in favour of resistance, he does not say much about it, nor does he narrate the process of resistance. He is really giving an explanation – even though he does not fully say so – of why there cannot be resistance. When he writes about prisons and clinics, or about the psychiatric profession, he does not devote much space to how people resist such things. He focuses instead on how they are subjected to them and created as subjects by

[296] Foucault, 1990: 101.

[297] According to Cathy J. Cohen, heteronormativity is "both those localized practices and those centralized institutions which legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and 'natural' within society" (Cohen, 1997: 440). Heteronormativity therefore involves the idea that the only "normal" form of sexual and marital relations is heterosexual. This aligns biological sex with sexuality, gender roles and gender identities, in that genders are believed to be distinct and complementary (Leap, 2006: 98-100).

[298] Foucault's 1966 book *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences* introduced the notion of episteme. According to Foucault, "in any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice" (Foucault, 2001: 183). Conditions of discourse, however, change over time, with the transition from one period's episteme to another leading to a change in the common conditions of truth or discourse that determine what can acceptably be affirmed.
In *The Order of Things* Foucault gave examples of three epistemes:
I. Renaissance (resemblance and similitude)
II. Classical (representation, ordering, identity and difference, leading to categorization and taxonomy; at this point, the concept of "man" had not yet been defined and therefore was not subject to an epistemological awareness as such)
III. Modern (the episteme that Foucault aims to expose).

them.[299] Thus, a Foucauldian approach is not appropriate if one seeks to find out *how* people have resisted.

The thing the activists in my study were successfully seeking to resist was heteronormativity; and this has been a major topic for Foucauldian research, under the heading of Queer theory. This theory, which is a branch of discourse theory, came to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a field of critical theory that draws on feminism, constructionism and post-structuralism;[300] it is widely used when dealing with gay rights and homosexuality. Queer theory is about understanding the mainstream discourse on homosexuality and exposing it as repressive and arbitrary in its separating out of homosexuality from normality. It shows how heteronormativity is created and preserved, with the emphasis being on how homosexuals are oppressed through discourse. Queer politics emerged in the early 1980s thanks to the anti-gay and lesbian movement backlash of that time, led by the New Right but also supported by the mainstream of the Republican Party. This backlash dashed hopes that the advancement of gay rights which had taken place under Carter marked the beginning of a new paradigm of tolerance and pluralism.[301]

Stein and Plummer[302] listed four main characteristics of queer theory:

I) "A conceptualization of sexuality which sees sexual power embodied in different levels of social life, expressed discursively and enforced through boundaries and binary divides";

II) "the problematization of sexual and gender categories, and of identities in general. Identities are always on uncertain ground, entailing displacements of identification and knowing";

III) "a rejection of civil rights strategies in favour of a politics of carnival, transgression, and parody which leads to deconstruction, de-centring, revisionist readings, and an assimilationist politics";

IV) "a willingness to interrogate areas which normally would not be seen as the terrain of sexuality, and to conduct queer 'readings' of ostensibly heterosexual or non-sexualized texts."

[299] Welch, 2013: 90-96.
[300] Gamson, 1995: 393; Seidman, 1994: 174; Stein and Plummer, 1994: 181.
[301] Gamson, 1995: 393; Seidman, 1994: 172.
[302] 1994: 181-182.

While Queer theory certainly highlights the extent to which society, and by extension the political discourse, is heteronormative, often to the detriment of homosexuals,[303] the topic at hand calls for a more comprehensive approach. This research is about the attempt to *resist* heteronormativity, whereas queer theory is in general a critique of all the different ways in which heteronormativity is *established*. The implication of the theory is that heteronormativity is more or less pervasive, irresistible, and so on;[304] but my study is precisely about the steps that people took to successfully *resist* heteronormativity. For that, one needs a concrete, practical and historical investigation, unconstrained by any *a priori* assumptions that resistance is hopeless, as the idea of heteronormativity implies. Therefore, queer theory is, by definition, not very useful for this current research. What I am attempting to do is to give a descriptive and empirically valid account of an attempt by gay people, through the methods of political organisation, to change and improve their lives. This included gaining rights, changing public discourse about homosexuality and bringing the issue of gay rights into US politics; a place where they had previously been completely ignored, if not actively repressed. Queer theory tells us that homosexuals have got a problem that needs to be overcome, but my dissertation is not about analysing that problem: it is about analysing the concrete ways in which they solved that problem. For such a purpose, social movement theory is much more appropriate, because my thesis is a concrete description, through various different mechanisms – the most important being cultural framing and organisational resources – of how they did it.

Finally, I am going to talk about legitimation, which in some way contributes to discourse. However, I believe there is a major difference between the two. Discourse theory tends to generalise about big discourses that control everybody, but in practice, legitimation, in political terms, is much more of a step-by- step process. Little, bitty things happen, leaving deposits that gradually change the discourse. Sweeping statements about what the discourse is do not tap into or measure that.

Neither could I have applied discourse theory to evangelicals. There might be some novelty in applying discourse theory to the countermovement of evangelicals, since it has been typical to use discourse theory to deconstruct hegemonic discourses rather than marginal

[303] Cohen, 1997: 437-465; Seidman, 1994: 166-177.
[304] Cohen, 1997: 437-465; Seidman, 1994: 166-177.

ones. The discourse against which evangelicals are reacting ("secular humanism" as they call it[305]) is, like heteronormativity, a possible target for Foucauldian deconstruction. However, my focus here is not on how evangelicals are marginalised – if that had been the case, such a theory could have perhaps been used – but rather on how homosexuals de-marginalised themselves, with evangelicals figuring as a norm-preserving response to this effort.

Furthermore, Foucauldian discourse analysis focuses on a different set of processes to the ones I am interested in. It does have some overlap with cultural framing ideas, but it places more emphasis on the powers that be and their role in framing discourse, whereas cultural framing is open to novel cultural framings. Social movement theory is also better suited to evangelicals, because fundamentalism was a relative novelty in the 1970s. It was not an expression of a long-standing theological discourse in the United States: fundamentalism only appeared in the early 20th century and then reappeared rather dramatically in the 1970s. Thus using Foucault to attempt to understand it as a heavy, long, permanent, historical weight of thought would be a misunderstanding of what it was actually about. It's not just that fundamentalists, unlike gay people, are not a minority; it's also that, just as with cultural framing by gay rights groups versus queer theory, my emphasis is on the novel cultural activity of the group. Therefore, it is not a Foucauldian topic. Again, it is *resistance*; and as stated earlier, Foucault does not discuss resistance. Thus, it is much better understood as cultural framing, where you do not have the baggage of the idea – the basis of discourse theory – that the discourse is somehow fixed in society, that the discourse itself is controlling things. With cultural framing, you have the idea that the people, or at least some people, can control the discourse themselves, change it, open it up a bit, and add new elements to it – which is far more realistic, for a start, and far more relevant to what I am doing. Finally, I am interested in social movement theory, which is a better alternative than Foucault, because it is more dynamic and it gives more scope for the initiative of grassroots forces; whereas Foucault pays lip service to such things, but doesn't actually give you the theoretical resources to discuss them. He can explain to you why movements failed; but in this case, the gay rights movement did not fail.

[305] Wuthnow, 1989: 44.

Rational Choice Approaches

As it has been stated, my approach is neither normative nor discursive, but an empirical discussion of a policy-making case; and as I will go on to explain shortly, the theoretical framework I will be using is that of Social movement theory. However, within empirical political science, there are other approaches. One major contender for analytical priority in political science is Rational choice theory, which is about how outcomes result from individual choices through the application of economics methods to the study of politics.[306] In so far as it is applicable to my topic (a concrete policy-making environment), Public choice theory, or any theory based on Rational choice theory, is about the composition of individual choices in such environments.

Public choice theory has been in existence since the early 1950s, particularly with the comprehensive contribution made by Anthony Downs in the area of economic theory of democracy.[307] The pioneering work by Buchanan and Tullock[308] offered, among other things, a number of approaches for analysing the efficiency and equity of economic and political institutions under the so-called *calculus of consent.* However, it took nearly thirty years for mainstream economists to appreciate the potential that the theory can offer in evaluating the workability and efficacy of economic and political institutions.[309]

Public choice theory is about how groups of people make effective political choices; it deals with institutional competition and the way that diverse pressures get composed into a single outcome. It analyses the compositional process by which individual preferences turn into political decisions. The "compositional process", means things like "is this a state-level decision or is it a federal-level decision", "what's the relationship between the two", "how much are courts involved", and "what's the electoral system", "is it first past the post or is it proportional".[310]

The two main branches of public choice, namely constitutional economics and the theory of political institutions, tend to approach and evaluate individuals and institutions from their choices that they make vis-à-vis economic rents/interest objectives.[311] In short, public choice economists attach much greater weight to individuals' self-interest than their

[306] Muller, 2003: 1.
[307] Downs, A. (1957) *An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy*.
[308] Buchanan, J.M. and Tullock, G. (1962) *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*.
[309] Shaw, 2008: 1-3.
[310] Buchanan & Tollison, 1984; Monroe, 1997.
[311] Dunleavy, 2014.

community spirit, hence falling short of what political scientists tend to argue for and promote. In the light of the above definitions and the nature of public choice theory as an economic tool of analysis, the researcher came to the conclusion that this theory would not necessarily be suitable for the analysis of gay rights; this movement being wholly based on winning emancipation, political freedom and rights for a group of people.

Public choice theory would have been useful if one wanted to write a thesis about questions like the ones mentioned above (how much are court involved for example), or why some states' gay rights policies were in advance of other states' gay rights policies, or how homosexual gay rights groups were concentrated in cities; and so where there were significant political gains to be made in cities that had some national prominence, that could possibly have helped them. However, I have already defined my topic in this research as "presidential politics", so it does not have much to do with public choice theory as I am not investigating a complex institutional structure. Nor am I investigating a kind of competition between gay rights groups and lots of other groups that also wanted the attention of the president. I am not interested in the rivalry between multiple pressure groups or the institutional strategies by which they choose one venue rather than another venue. These are all public choice theory topics; but I am focusing on one particular venue, which is presidential discourse, presidential rhetoric, and presidential decision making – and there's a theoretical framework relevant to that, which is social movement theory. Furthermore, public choice theory is not relevant my thesis because there is no compositional issue here; I am not composing an outcome through the interaction of many political institutions. Finally, in my thesis, I take for granted that problems/questions exist and am not interested in finding out the reasons for their existence; my thesis is about the attempt by gay rights activists to overcome the problem they faced. Thus public choice theory would not have been helpful.

Decision-making[312] theory, which centres around the reasoning behind choices, was another possible option for this thesis. There are two types of decision-making theories: the normative and the behavioural. The first type is prescriptive, aiming to show how decisions should be made; the second type is descriptive, aiming to explain how decisions are actually made in practice, and how this process can be improved. Decision-making theories explore

[312] Decision-making has been defined as a five-step process that takes place in response to the existence of a decision-making situation. First, identifying the problem; second, defining it; third, identifying alternatives; fourth, assessing consequences; and finally, choosing among the alternatives (Caroll & Johnson, 1990 Tymchuck et al, 1988). Decision-making skills have three aspects: interpreting a stimulus, forming and evaluating different ways of responding to it, and choosing an appropriate response (Gumpel, 1994).

all varieties of choices, from the trivial and short-term (e.g. an individual's choice of what clothes to buy), to the life-changing (e.g. their choice of what career to pursue). As well as choices, decision-making theory also deals with beliefs and desires, and how these "preference attitudes" work with each other.[313]

Decision-making research can focus on organisations as well as individuals. Whereas behavioural theories deal with the choices made by individuals, the choices of organisations can be analysed through the use of economic theories and group decision theories, for example game theory and agency theory.[314] Chester I. Barnard argued in his landmark work *The Functions of the Executive* (1938) that decisions made by organisations should be analysed in a different way to those made by individuals; the latter as psychological activities, the former as social processes. Also, the choices of individuals usually impact only on the person making the choice and perhaps their closest acquaintances. However, decisions made by groups and institutions have wider effects; the higher the level at which the choice is made, the more important it becomes. It therefore follows that the decisions of organisations deserve greater attention than those of individuals or lower-level units. In empirical research, decision-making theories are generally applied through statistical and econometric methods; in particular through discrete choice models, estimated via maximum likelihood.[315]

Both Public choice theory and Decision-making theory are based on rational choice approaches to these compositional questions of political decision-making; hence they contain various mathematical ways for dealing with these questions. These theories would have been suitable for studying the decisions made by the three groups of actors in this thesis (Jimmy Carter, gay rights activists and evangelical activists) through constructing a logical, mathematical system to explain how their choices were made. However, I am not interested in mathematically modelling the composition of political decisions and how they are taken. My intention is not to determine the reasoning behind each decision taken, but rather to show how such decisions affected the three actors in my thesis and the advance of gay rights in the USA. Thus, again, such theories would not have been useful for my purposes.

[313] Fischhoff, 1988; Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky, 1982; Pitz & Sachs, 1984; Rubinstein, 1975; von Neumann & Morgenstem, 1944.
[314] Zey, 1992.
[315] Barnard, 1975; Gati & Asher, 2000; Park et all, 2017: 97-120; Phillips & Pazienza, 1988.

Social movement theory

A social movement is a form of collective behaviour whereby a group unites around a shared goal or goals, to engage in activities to influence or pressure governments or other decision-makers to enact policies consistent with these; the deliberate collaboration of people in a group towards creating some sort of change.[316] Social movements arise when people feel that they have no way to get their issues addressed in the context of mainstream political parties, or perhaps because they are explicitly excluded from them. In this way, they are a "grassroots" response to a situation in the wider community, and in the realm of political decision-making.

Collective behaviour includes activities such as revolution, riots, crowd behaviour, and so forth, whereas social movements are specifically organised forms of collective behaviour that work towards certain clear goals, last for significant periods, and are organised. Social movements are built on rational, goal-oriented foundations. They require shared beliefs and the sense of solidarity necessary to mount a campaign,[317] but spring from common outlooks, identities, and dissatisfaction with the status quo. They also differ significantly from revolutionary movements, which seek to overthrow a government or state; social movements present sustained challenges to the status quo but do not try to topple governments.[318] Social movements' purpose is to make society change,[319] and they involve "collective efforts by socially and politically subordinated people to challenge the conditions and assumptions of their lives."[320]

Social movements are typically composed of networks of informal interactions between individual people, groups and organisations, predicated on a shared identity, and

[316] Turner, 1981.
[317] Goodwin and Jasper, 2004: 19.
[318] Goodwin and Jasper, 2003: 3.
[319] Zald and Berger, 1978: 828.
[320] Damovsky, Epstein and Flacks, 1995: vii.

involved in political and/or cultural conflict. They are flexible and prone to change, with deep links to identity and community, and they engage in repeated public displays of collective behaviour outside official channels (protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and so forth).[321] Generally, social movement theorists have tended to look much more at progressive rather than conservative social movements.[322] Here, we are going to explore two social movements: the gay rights movement, and the evangelical right.

The gay rights movement emerged from homosexuals' view that they deserved equality, and from the emergence of gay rights, in the wake of the civil rights movement, as an increasingly politicised movement with a strong identity. With the advent of the gay rights movement, homosexuals demanded the same rights as everyone else, in the context of a society that generally saw homosexuality as aberrant and wrong, that had legislated against any expressions of homosexuality, and that often acted brutally upon that legislation. However, the gay rights movement did not seek to overthrow established political structures and replace them with a new, sympathetic government. Rather, it sought through sustained effort to gain recognition and support and the transformation, rather than abolition, of existing structures and political systems.

The evangelical right came together as a counter movement in response to the liberalisation of American society. While it fought against a wide range of liberal demands, including demands for abortion and women's rights, the gay rights movement was an important rallying point for the evangelical right, which fiercely opposed the movement from its emergence in its modern form in the 1970s. The gay rights movement has, similarly, tended to evolve in response to threats from the evangelical right. The two movements have

[321] Tilly, 1999.
[322] McVeigh, 2009.

been described as "perfect enemies," each depending to a great extent on the other for its identity and growth.[323]

When he made his final address, Carter made an oblique reference to the fact that his presidency had been hampered by the special interests in a position of influence that had taken advantage of his fragmented power, inhibiting his ability to make decisions. While Carter had become president with a clearly defined, ideological view of the public good, he felt that his mission to work towards this was stymied by members of congress, and those in administrative positions who sympathised with them, who sought to protect only their own interests.[324] With the benefit of hindsight, we can see even more clearly how profoundly interest groups like those referenced by Carter, and social movements like the gay rights movement, impacted on his presidency in a variety of ways.

CLASSICAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Over the years, scholars have explored both the rational and the emotional inputs to social movements, often in terms of binary oppositions.[325] The study of social movements per se emerged as a topic for scholarship in the US in the 1960s, with a focus on organised forms of collective behaviour around specific goals, such as the anti-war protests of the Vietnam era. Most research on social movements has explored three broad areas, which can be defined as a) why social movements emerge, b) how they develop and are maintained after their emergence, and c) their impact. In this section, we will briefly explore the trajectory of the development of the major models of Social Movement Theory, starting with the Classical model, and looking at views emerging from both US and European scholarship.

[323] Bull and Gallagher, 1996: 266.
[324] Gais et all, 1984: 161-2.
[325] Edwards, 2014: 3.

The classical model proposes that when social structures break apart, more people make demands or express dissatisfaction. It maintains that social movements are essentially emotional, and arise from a sort of crowd mentality.[326] This draws on the idea of crowd theory; when enough people come together, they will do things that they would not individually do. This is an idea held by theorists from elite groups that did not generally sympathise with change-seekers or understand their point of view.[327] This view was essentially negative, in which most scholars "saw [social movements] as dangerous mobs who acted irrationally, blindly following demagogues."[328] Proponents of this theory assume that dissatisfaction is typically short-lived and that activists were acting irrationally,[329] in response to collective grievances arising from deprivation or a sense of social alienation.[330] Collective behaviour is described as operating outside institutional rules, and therefore particularly adapted to dealing with unstructured situations, "when the established organization ceases to afford direction and supply channels for action."[331]

Social movements' increasingly sophisticated tactics and their members and goals from the 1950s onwards made scholars revisit their assumptions about collective action, in particular the idea that it was essentially irrational, and bound to peter out.[332] Increasingly, scholars recognised that social movements had political aims and organisational features that clearly identified them as much more than just emotion-driven, irrational behaviour.[333] The so-called Chicago School, epitomised by Hubert Blumer's work,[334] suggests that social movements emerge from a "shared understanding." Again, this view maintains that social

[326] Edwards, 2014: 10.
[327] Jasper, 2014: 26.
[328] Goodwin and Jasper, 2003: 5.
[329] Jenkins, 1983: 528.
[330] Edwards, 2014: 1.
[331] Morris and Herring, 1987: 146.
[332] Tarrow, 1988: 423.
[333] McAdam, 1999: 1.
[334] Edwards, 2014: 11.

movements emerge from a place of emotion and spontaneity[335] and are "collective enterprises seeking to establish a new way of life."[336]

In 1951, Talcott Parsons published *The Social System*, arguing that social order rested upon a shared set of values and that conflicts and protests were inevitable when these were no longer shared. In these situations, efforts will be made to stop the disruption, by adapting to the new situation or by creating movements that propose returning to an era experienced as more stable.[337] Thus, social movements can be either progressive or regressive. Again, Parsons' understanding of social movements was that they were, collective in nature by definition, with considerable emotional components, in the form of the "shared set of values" referenced above. Parsons' work contributed to the development of Neil Smelser's theories on collective behaviour.

In 1962, Smelser built on Parsons' work when he defined collective behaviour as the mobilisation of individuals to remove "strain" from society (which we can understand as the loss of the shared values mentioned by Parsons, and the collective understanding of members of the group that things need to change) by changing social norms or the distribution of resources.[338] This strain introduced an element of instability to society; one way or another, the strain could not persist indefinitely. While scholars such as Blumer, Parsons, and Smelser contributed to the development of a greater understanding of social movements, their theories still emphasised emotions and values as a core component of groups' motivation, without exploring additional inputs. Smelser's structural functionalist approach proposes group leaders emerging only after a movement has come into being.[339] Parsons' and Smelser's work also resonates with that of Truman in political science, whose work on interest groups is

[335] Morris and Herring, 1987: 147-8.
[336] Edwards, 2014: 4.
[337] Useem, 1975.
[338] Smelser, 1962: 71.
[339] Morris and Herring, 1987: 151-3.

discussed briefly below. Truman's position, that a group emerges when an interest arises in society, can be understood in terms of "strain" or "conflict" in a society in which views on important matters are no longer convergent.

MATERIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES

By the mid-1960s, there had been a shift in social movement theory from simply looking at movements in terms of collective behaviour to a new emphasis on the role of resources; including tangible resources (such as access to money) and organisational resources (such as access to power or to an organised body of activists prepared to lend support to the movement). In 1965, Mancur Olson,[340] an economist and social scientist, made a big impact on the theory of social movements and political behaviour in general by raising the question of the collective action problem. He suggested that, while there are many occasions on which groups or movements *could* form – because there is an interest, or a strain, for example, frequently they do not, because each individual considers it rational to leave the job of organising it to someone else.[341] Olson felt that any kind of collective action requires resources to be provided from outside, and primarily considered resources in tangible terms, such as money or other material goods.[342]

Moving on from the idea of social movements as essentially emotion-driven mass movements, a focus on resources provides us with a way to explore them as rational responses to social inequality. Social movements involve a conversation about what needs to change for a better society.[343] They tend to become increasingly institutionalised and organised over time, leading to a "repeatable process that is essentially self-sustaining… in

[340] *The Logic of Collective Action*.
[341] Goodwin and Jasper, 2004: 6; Olson, 1965.
[342] Olson, 1965; Walker, 1983: 391.
[343] Mansbridge, 1995: 27.

which all the relevant actors can resort to well-established and familiar routines."[344] This growing institutionalisation and organisation can be viewed as an organisational resource that is much to the benefit of the organisation.

Doug McAdam, Professor of Sociology at Stanford University, provides us with a study with a strong emphasis on organisational resources. He believes that social organisations essentially emerge from "a combination of expanding political opportunities and indigenous organisation."[345] He points out that high-profile incidents tend to attract popular and scholarly attention, while it is easy to overlook work going on in the background. While the Stonewall Riot is often credited with initiating the gay rights movement,[346] various organisations had been engaging in collective action[347] to lay the foundation for the movement for some time.

Resource Mobilisation theory maintains that only the power elite (for example, power holders and decision makers in business and government) can make the structural decisions necessary for change. Therefore, social movements need either the resources of the power elite, or enough resources to oppose them.[348] When a social movement has no access to resources, it may enter a dormant state until some become available. Thus, Resource Mobilisation theory sees social movements as cyclical, and tied to external sources of support, as "a sustained series of interactions between a challenging group and the State."[349]

Social movements act differently depending on their access to resources. They may be competing with other groups for the same pot of money, for example, or they may have a large or a small number of donors.[350] However, while money is typically an important

[344] Meyer and Tarrow, 1998: 21.
[345] McAdam, 1999: 2.
[346] McAdam, 1996: 32.
[347] McAdam, 1999: 15.
[348] Kendall, 2005.
[349] Jenkins, 1983: 15.
[350] Jasper, 2014: 28.

resource, factors such as a high level of organisational infrastructure, or widespread recognition as having a valid cause, can also be seen as resources.

Professors of Sociology John McCarthy and Mayer Zald state that one must understand "the selection of incentives, cost-reducing mechanisms or structures and career benefits [for individuals] that lead to collective behaviour."[351] They also stress the importance of external support.[352] Although not all the people who support the movement and its goals are activists, they represent an important source of crucial resources. Moreover, alliances with and support from elite groups with a detailed understanding of public opinion are hugely important.[353]

According to McCarthy and Zald, "the resource mobilization approach de-emphasizes grievances and focuses on societal supports and constraints of movements, tactical dilemmas, social control, media usage, and the interplay of external supports and elites."[354] This approach emphasises questions that relate to the accumulation of resources, the forms and structures organisations take, the issues of supply and demand within movements, systems of cost and reward, and the recognition of the role that outsiders can play.[355]

McCarthy and Zald maintain that social movements can find resources beyond the boundaries of the group, and point out that social movement organisations often rely on outside funding from individuals or bodies acting philanthropically.[356] Group leaders obtain authority when they have access to and control over resources, while other members are rewarded by a sense of solidarity, or other "nonmaterial" benefits.[357] Groups that appeal to

[351] McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1216.
[352] McCarthy and Zald, 1977.
[353] McAdam, 1996; Tarrow, 1998.
[354] McCarthy and Zald, 1979: vii.
[355] McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1216.
[356] McCarthy and Zald, 1973: 18.
[357] McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1227.

wealthier elements of society, and have more access to money and social capital, tend to do better than groups campaigning for poorer, more marginalised elements.[358]

The theoretical shift towards studying organisational factors brought social movement theory closer to the study of interest groups. Interest group theory connects with social movement theory insofar as both interest groups and social movements depend on political bodies, including parties and interest groups, and on mobilising a broad base of supporters, and are vulnerable to the potential that other groups will place pressure on political parties.[359] In the 1950s, David Truman, a prominent political scientist, developed an understanding of interest groups as arising spontaneously when potential members are forced by circumstances to interact and become increasingly aware of their shared interests.[360] Truman does not, however, discuss the role of tangible resources. Strongly motivated minorities become enabled through interest group activity to overcome majority views,[361] while they create a group agenda from individuals' concerns,[362] which can be "packaged" as the interests of the group.[363]

Interest groups engage with government as formal groups with the intention of influencing public policy,[364] and can take the form of voluntary associations, trade associations, institutions (including corporations and religious denominations), think tanks, and more.[365] There are both "insider" and "outsider" interest groups[366] – respectively, those that have direct contacts in the government and may even be sponsored by it, and those that operate outside these privileged channels and also challenge them (groups that can be seen as having greater or lesser access to resources). They play an important role in defining

[358] Jasper, 2014: 29.
[359] Wilson, 1991: 83.
[360] Walker, 1983: 390.
[361] Wilson, 1981: 1.
[362] Salisbury, 1990.
[363] Snow and Brown, 1997.
[364] Heinz et al., 1993.
[365] Salisbury, 1990: 205-6.
[366] Welch, 2002: 62.

"national interests," preferences, and priority during the decision-making process,[367] as they pursue their interests within accepted procedures, work with authorities, and develop relationships between group leaders and the relevant officials.[368] Some interest groups have greater material or organisation resources than others.[369] The context (institutional, historical and ideological) within which political decisions are taken is also important. Interest groups whose goals mesh more readily with those of the government are more likely to succeed.[370]

Frequently, interest groups formed out of groups that had started as social movements,[371] as in the case of various entities involved in the civil rights movement, which shifted from attempting to pressure the government to concede their aims, to playing a role within the echelons of power. According to this model, policy emerges from negotiation and compromise,[372] and the relationship between interest groups and their members consists of, "exchange relationships between entrepreneurs/organizers, who invest capital in a set of benefits, which they offer to prospective members."[373] When political parties consider a group's aims unacceptable, they reject them, but if there may be a political advantage, they endeavour to include them.[374] Movements with substantial numbers of supporters often see political parties becoming polarised around their issues.[375] Interest groups that can engage with both parties in the US system are the most effective.[376] Political parties tend to turn to interest groups to obtain votes; a system that has been described as "ideological patronage."[377] Interest groups need to know the "power elite" which makes the decisions that

[367] Milner, 1992: 494.
[368] Schwartz and Paul, 1992: 221-2.
[369] Smith, 1995: 212.
[370] Smith, 1995: 215-8.
[371] Costain and Costain, 1987; Lowi, 1971; Piven and Cloward, 1979; Tarrow, 1994; Zald and Ash, 1966: 327-41.
[372] Hertzke, 1988.
[373] Salisbury, 1969: 2.
[374] Frymer, 1999.
[375] Offe, 1985; Piven, 1991.
[376] Hansen, 1991.
[377] Milkis, 1993.

really matter.[378] While the gay rights movement functioned primarily as a social movement, the emergence of highly organised bodies such as the NGTF, with centralised resources and even some full-time staff, increasingly operated as an interest group, lobbying the government through established channels of communication.

CULTURAL FRAMING

Resource mobilisation theory has tended to overlook psychological and emotional motivators, simply not addressing factors such as identity and culture.[379] Issues around matters such as identity and self-fulfilment tend to be dismissed as a "loss of strategic effectiveness,"[380] rather than as a potential resource in themselves.[381] It tends to measure success or failure in concrete terms only, such as the extent to which funds have been channelled in the direction of the movement, or its success in obtaining access to material possessions or resources. This overlooks how social attitudes and culture can change as a result of social movements, as elements of a successful outcome.[382] It fails to consider the networks that surround social movements and provide support, and to explain how some groups with very limited resources have managed to create meaningful change. It is, in fact, crucial to understand that factors such as "respectability" and "recognition" are also significant resources that play an important role in obtaining a social movement's goals.

An important aspect of social movements and interest groups lies in their role in creating a public, collective sense of identity that is both a characteristic and a resource of the group. The main aim of this is to raise consciousness among potential members of the group (for example, as in our case, homosexuals), but it is also about gaining wider visibility and

[378] Dahl, 1968: 5.
[379] Cohen, 1985: 674.
[380] Cohen, 1985: 689.
[381] Kendall, 2005.
[382] Staggenborg, 1991: 40.

raising consciousness among as many people as possible. An understanding of cultural framing helps us to appreciate the "subjective meanings people attribute to their 'objective' circumstances."[383] Thus, political and human rights issues can become aligned not just with an aggrieved group of people, but with anyone who finds resonance in the identity that they project. In this way, expressions of identity ("a search for meaning and an expression of one's views"[384]) can be powerful motivators. Much scholarship on the subject of social movements in the US has explored the way "movements have used symbols, language, discourse, identity, and other dimensions of culture to recruit, retain, mobilize and motivate members."[385]

The importance of identity to these groups is illustrated by the example of abortion. Pro- and anti-abortion campaigning have a much keener focus, and attract much more attention, in the US than in most European countries.[386] The reason why is the symbolic hold that views on abortion have on matters of identity. In general, the new social movements of the 1960s and 70s were identity-based to a very great degree, as activists (including gay rights activists) argued that they had the right for their identities and lifestyles to be acknowledged and respected, and factors such as social class did not, in general, predict involvement in a movement.[387] The same identity that leads to the oppression that groups strive against (such as homosexuality) can be a source of power, in providing an otherwise very disparate group of people with a common sense of identity and purpose,[388] leading to a feeling of solidarity, motivation, and collective action.[389] In this context, "identity" acts, such as the open expression of affection on the part of a gay couple, or a public display of religious

[383] McAdam, 1999: 34.
[384] Klandermans, 2004: 361.
[385] Williams, 2004: 93.
[386] Polletta and Jasper, 2002: 284.
[387] Polletta and Jasper, 2002: 286.
[388] Hunt and Benford, 2004: 446.
[389] Williams, 2004: 94.

faith, can be seen as a political act and a challenge to the status quo.[390] Moreover, the identity aspect of the new social movements facilitated the growth of networking and collaboration between movements whose identities merged;[391] for example, the feminist and the gay rights (especially where pertaining to lesbian rights) movements.

Furthermore, social movement and interest groups are not merely groups in which people with a shared identity find a common cause, and an expression of their views, but are active agents of identity framing and creating, "engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for protagonists, antagonists, and bystanders."[392] The gay rights movement, historically rooted in relatively small groups agitating for issues like the decriminalisation of homosexuality, came to be framed as not just a narrow interest group, but also a vanguard of a larger movement towards ever-greater liberalisation across society. Understanding the importance of the extent to which individuals can identify with the core qualities of such groups is essential. It has been noted that major legislative changes are not possible until a critical mass of the population has been won over on a level that transcends simple material needs.[393] Rational reasons for desiring or resisting change, coupled with issues of identity, make for a compelling force.[394]

Cultural framing is deeply relevant to any discussion of social movements that looks at the matter of resources. In the context of this thesis, we consider the emergence of the gay rights movement as a potential cultural identifier of homosexual Americans as a group with the right to be heard. We can also view it as a legitimate extension of the civil rights movement, which created such a strong paradigm for identity politics, granting the issue of minority rights more exposure than ever before. Carter's many acknowledgements of the gay

[390] Williams, 2004: 103.
[391] Diani, 2004: 339.
[392] Snow, 2004: 384.
[393] Snow, 2004: 393.
[394] Goodwin et al, 2004: 413.

rights movement as an important element of the American electorate represent gay activists' acquisition of the potent cultural resources of respectability and recognition.

Carter's significant degree of engagement with the gay rights movement, including the iconic first meeting with gay rights activists in the White House, was a profound indicator of the official legitimisation of the gay rights movement at the highest levels of government in the United States. Carter thus helped both to frame gay rights as a valid and important civil rights cause – an important cultural resource in itself – and to provide the movement with tangible organisational resources in the form of access to decision-makers and influential members of government and the civil service, with the physical presence of a senior White House official at meetings with gay rights activists and said decision-makers. Consequently, the gay rights movement was both tangibly empowered, by gaining unprecedented access to the highest levels of government, and symbolically enriched, by being visibly granted legitimisation, making gay rights activism and support of the same a more attractive prospect to millions of American citizens.

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT (NSM) THEORY AND THE AMERICAN CASE

The topics of culture and identity arise also in an area of theory which many see as concerned with a new phase of social movement activity – "new social movements." NSM theory emerged in Europe in response to the rise in social movements concerned with peace and the environment.[395] It was predicated on the assumption that, while conflicts had once been class based, now they were replaced by other types of conflict, and materialism by post-materialism. It focuses on how ideology, a sense of community, and identity can mobilise social movements, which challenge broad societal norms by posing questions around issues of identity. This maintains that the movements emerging from the new post-industrial

[395] Inglehart, 1977; Melucci, 1985; Offe, 1985; Tarrow, 1988.

economy were quantitatively different from movements in the industrial economy. NSM theory focussed on issues such as civil rights, gay rights, pacifism or human rights.[396] Social changes were seen as more important than monetary wellbeing, and asserting individual and collective identity as valuable per se. Collective identities, "the shared definitions of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences, and solidarity,"[397] form as group members experience and deal with problems together, developing an ideological approach and a collective strategy,[398] introducing a "new cultural orientation."[399]

Scholars of NSM theory recognise in them the importance of "their emphasis on consciousness, self-actualization, and the expression of subjective feelings, desires, and experiences — or new collective identities — as a strategy of political change."[400] NSM theory tends to politicise identities that previously were not political at all – such as homosexuality or environmentalism – and to defend them, while members benefit from "the opportunity to articulate, elaborate, alter, or affirm one's moral sensibilities, principles, and allegiances."[401] NSM theory significantly challenges many of the most fundamental norms, positing a "new cultural orientation,"[402] and becoming alienated from more traditional political groups.[403] They engage in sit-ins, protests and other types of civil disobedience.[404] They tend to be predicated around relatively small groups and organised locally, emerging almost organically when a critical body of adherents to a certain belief system has been reached.[405]

[396] Pichardo, 1997.
[397] Taylor, 1989: 771.
[398] Melucci, 1989: 342.
[399] Eder, 1982: 15.
[400] Taylor, 1995: 226.
[401] Jasper, 1997: 15.
[402] Eder, 1982: 15.
[403] Dalton and Kuechlier, 1990.
[404] Melucci, 1980: 220.
[405] Converse, 1964: 207.

Historically, the American political system has tended not to be obviously aligned with the class system, while voters have become less and less deferential towards politicians. In other words, social movement theory's claim that it represents a complete shift towards identity in social movements is an overstatement in the case of America. The two factors mentioned above have combined to create a somewhat more open, flexible democratic system, and social movements with strong cultural aspects.

It is important to note that there had long been social movements in the US that were not closely aligned to social class. In fact, the idea of such movements as "moral crusades" was already well-known in the US, so American critics of NSM theories queried whether such movements were new at all.[406] The Euro-centric view tends to overlook a relatively long history of new social movements in the United States dating back to the nineteenth century, and to overstate the novelty of the movements that were emerging in the 1960s and 70s.[407] While the civil rights movement, for example, was the unique emergence of Black identity politics, it also occurred in a broad historical context that had seen a variety of social movements emerging from the grassroots of American society. Essentially, new social movements emerged in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the country was experiencing a significant increase in ethnic and religious diversity due to high, and rising, levels of immigration;[408] and before socialism was organised along "modern" and "scientific" lines.[409]

NSM continued to emerge throughout the century, which was a time of rapid social change, with many adherents to emergent movements, including "communitarianism, temperance, and various dietary and lifestyle movements," featuring "religious awakening, revitalization and free thinking," as well as anti-slavery movements and campaigns for

[406] Williams, 2004: 92.
[407] Calhoun, 1993: 386.
[408] Welch, 2002: 58.
[409] Calhoun, 1993: 388.

popular education. However, the abundance of social movements with new ideas and approaches all contributed to an atmosphere of rapid social change and openness to new ideas that resembled in some respects that of the 1960s, over a century later. In fact, many of the later movements subsequently identified as "new social movements" actually have their historical roots in this period – modern feminism, for instance, can be traced back to both the work of early feminist activists and theorists and the activism of women in the anti-slavery and temperance movements.[410] The temperance movement, in particular, was an important arena in which women gained experience and expertise in activism; whereas labour movements at the same time were often met with repression, the government of the day looked with favour on temperance.[411]

These nineteenth century movements were "moral crusades" just as those of the 1960s and 70s were[412] and, also like them, were "affinity groups" rather than political organisations per se.[413] However, despite some criticism of the Eurocentric idea of the social movements of the 1960s and 70s as "new," US scholarship of social movements gained a lot from this field of research.[414] While the shift to new social movements was less marked in the United States than in Europe, movements including civil rights and gay rights can be viewed in this light.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s was a hugely important one in terms of its mode of organisation, and the way in which it used protests and demonstrations. As well as achieving major breakthroughs for the cause of civil rights, it also created specific models of organisation and protest that were used by the gay rights and other identity movements in America and elsewhere.

[410] Calhoun 1993: 392-3.
[411] Tarrow, 1996: 51.
[412] Calhoun, 1993: 399.
[413] Calhoun, 1993: 407.
[414] Williams, 2004: 92.

The civil rights movement was particularly influential in persuading scholars that new social movements were not, of necessity, led by emotion and essentially irrational, but that they could be conceptualised according to their organised, political characteristics. The modern civil rights movement was a reaction to the Jim Crow laws, which had been in place since the end of the Civil War, and which served to ensure that Black Americans would remain oppressed, by excluding them from the political process, designating them as inferior and insisting on segregation, and maintaining them in a state of poverty and subjugation by keeping them in a subservient position within the economic system. The system also facilitated widespread violence towards the Black population.[415]

While the modern civil rights movement developed from often covert movements that predated the end of slavery, and from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it really became visible to the wider public in the mid-twentieth century. This followed a number of decades during which Black organisations promoted direct non-violent action, such as the boycotting of businesses that refused to hire Black workers.[416] Boycott action, along with sit-ins, marches, and other forms of non-violent protest which necessitated the mobilisation of huge numbers, proved to be the most effective weapon against the discriminatory Jim Crow laws. The 1964 Civil Rights Act banned a wide range of discriminatory practices, signalling the success of the Black civil rights movement, and inspiring the emergence of other social movements that used similar tactics while they demanded the right to greater levels of political participation:[417] "… this legislation, and others generated by the civil rights movement, created the legal framework through which other groups gained the constitutional right to demand changes for their own population and they were to do so in the context of their movements for change."[418]

[415] Morris, 1999: 517-8.
[416] Morris, 1999: 520-1.
[417] Welch, 2002: 53.
[418] Morris, 1999: 528.

The gay rights, Native Americans', farmworkers' and other organisations all learned from the civil rights movement that non-violent protest was a way in which even poorly resourced groups could influence public policy through direct action,[419] while also cementing a strong sense of identity that, together with their grievances and special interests, brought their members together.[420] The American civil rights movement in turn directly impacted on social movement activity in Europe. One example of this influence is found in the Northern Irish Catholic Defence Movement, which was directly modelled on the civil rights movement. Essentially, the situation in America prefigured new social movements there and elsewhere, while NSM theory can contribute a theoretical dimension to the American experience.

In the case of the gay rights movement in particular, there are many points of relevance of the model to the evolution of the gay rights movement, which was not a class-based movement and which challenged long-held assumptions about how society should be ordered, and specifically the idea that heterosexuals had a naturally greater right to favourable treatment.

COUNTER-MOVEMENTS

In general, scholarship of the impact of counter movements on social movements has tended to lag behind the study of social movements.[421] We can identify this as a weakness in social movement theory. Historically, classical theorists disapproved of social movements, whereas more recent theorists generally approve of them and have reacted strongly against earlier templates for study. This dichotomy has led to a sort of blindness. Theories including resource mobilisation, cultural framing, and NSM theory react against earlier theories that

[419] Morris, 1999: 534; Welch, 2002: 58.
[420] Welsh, 2002: 59.
[421] Lo, 1982; Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996, 1998; Mottl, 1980; Zald and Useem, 1987.

saw social movements in a negative light, and typically look with favour on movements coming from the same left wing place as most commentators. Because these commentators and theorists see unrest in the form of civil action as progressive and, generally, a force for good in society, they have tended not to explore counter movements to these left wing social movements in any detail.

A counter movement, which emerges in response to another movement whose aims it wishes to combat, and undermine,[422] can negatively impact on social movements' ability to access political power, but can also inadvertently provide impetus and energy to it insofar as it presents a clear "enemy" and set of opposing demands to fight. Counter movements tend to emerge when it looks as though the group that they are opposed to is beginning to have some success, when the interests of the group appear to conflict with those in opposition to it, and when there are political allies available to help in the struggle against the group in question.[423] Typically, counter movements are populated by people who have more resources, which they wish to keep, in opposition to people fighting for the resources they lack from a "lower" position.[424] Weaver characterises this reaction as "frontlash," which she defines as "the process by which losers in a conflict become the architects of a new program, manipulating the issue of space and altering the dimension of the conflict in an effort to regain their command of the agenda."[425]

According to this schema, one sees the evangelical right responding to gains in the area of acceptance of homosexuality by reconfiguring the argument against homosexuality to one about the protection of children and the integrity of the American family – shifting the locus of the attack. Using the example of the civil rights movement, Weaver explores how the first counter-reaction to it involved passing legislation to criminalise non-violent protest such

[422] Freeman and Johnson, 1999, 241.
[423] Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996: 1635.
[424] Johnson, 1999, 241.
[425] Weaver, 2007: 236.

as sit-ins and "freedom rides," the second was to argue that granting civil rights would introduce crime to white areas, and the third was to maintain that areas that had already granted civil rights experienced higher levels of Black crime, and therefore illustrated that segregation and other forms of repression were necessary and that poverty was not a contributing factor to crime,[426] while characterising Black protest as "formless" and "senseless."[427] The next step was to take the position that extending civil rights to Blacks was tantamount to rewarding criminal behaviour.[428] The counter movement to the civil rights movement is a clear example of a group with more resources mobilising so as to ring-fence its privilege.[429] Counter movements are frequently consistent with McVeigh's theory of right-wing movements, defined as working to "preserve, restore, or expand rights and privileges."[430]

Clarence Lo, Professor of Sociology at the University of Missouri, describes counter movements as social movements which aim to maintain traditional social structures, differences or values, and states that, "Right wing [counter] movements sometimes directly advocate, and usually cause, the perpetuation of economic or political inequalities...[They] preserve long-standing institutions."[431] Others have stated the view that counter movements actually both resist *and* press for change.[432]

In the case of the evangelical right, it both advocated *against* gay rights, and *for* the integration of religion into the machinery of state. According to Randall Collins, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, "Without combative issues, a movement has a much harder time keeping up its energy and its solidarity, not least because it needs things to

[426] Weaver, 2007: 242.
[427] Weaver, 2007: 249.
[428] Weaver, 2007: 248.
[429] Johnson, 1999, 242.
[430] McVeigh, 2009: 38.
[431] Lo, 1982: 108.
[432] Lo, 1982: 118.

do which bring the members together in collective action."[433] The presence of a strong counter movement, as was the case for the evangelical right movement under Carter, "increases movement opportunities and resources, and strengthens cultural ties and collective identities."[434] Over time, opposing groups can come to depend on one another for their own growth and further development.

Social movements challenge society's norms and try to change beliefs and practices. Counter movements strive to maintain current beliefs and practices, but when a social movement succeeds in creating significant change, "new" norms can even be adopted by the counter movement. After the success of the civil rights movement, for example, counter movements opposed to progressive causes such as gay rights or abortion have often borrowed the language and the tactics of the civil rights movement, presenting themselves as a beleaguered group and using strategies such as passive resistance to further their aims.[435]

Movements that exist in opposition to each other can represent a significant drain on each other's resources. In areas of conflict, when a group is active it is practically a foregone conclusion that an opposing group will enter the scene. Each group will employ resources simply to fight off the other, potentially reducing opportunities to fight for core ideals.[436] Resistance through voting behaviour is a common way to protest against social movements,[437] so counter movements often take action to influence voter behaviour. They flourish so long as a given state enables their activities, while failing to satisfy their demands. Whereas most social movements per se tend to engage directly with the state, counter movements engage more with one another. [438]

[433] Collins, 2001: 27.
[434] Fetner, 2001: 413-414.
[435] Johnson, 1999, 256.
[436] Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996: 1649; Stone, 2016: 459.
[437] Mottl, 1980: 624.
[438] Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996.

Typically, a social movement and a counter movement become involved in a combative relationship in which the counter movement challenges gains made by the social movement, while both gain energy and impetus from oppositional politics. Movements that function in opposition do not engage in direct negotiation with one another, but create a distinct relationship in which each side uses the other to demand concessions from the state, policy makers, or the public. The interactions that emerge in this relationship form the strategies and claims of each side, as well as how each is organised. Alongside one another, two opposing groups can grow and flourish, maintaining a state of conflict in which the state can occasionally intervene on the side of one or the other.[439] The way in which they interact can both restrict and enable political actions taken on behalf of the organisations of the two opposing camps. By focusing on the aims (actual or supposed) of the groups that they are opposing, counter movements sometimes actually encourage more people to join a movement and grant it greater visibility. For example, the conflict in Dade County in 1977 (which we discuss later) was an important rallying call and motivator for the gay rights movement.[440]

The evangelical right and gay rights activists can be seen as both interest and social movement groups, the former being essentially an example of "reactionary forms of collective action" with a basis in traditional life[441] – reacting against the changes that had occurred, and were continuing to occur, and which threatened their cultural hegemony.[442] At a time when the number of evangelicals was growing quickly, the atmosphere was ripe for focused groups to emerge. By 1976, 34% of Americans described themselves as evangelicals. Throughout the 1970s there was rapid growth in the areas of Christian schools, colleges, radio stations, and specialist reading material.[443] For example, the Moral Majority headed by

[439] Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996: 1632.
[440] Stone, 2016: 464.
[441] Eder, 1982: 873.
[442] Wilson, 2007: 255.
[443] Liebman and Wuthnow, 1983: 234.

Jerry Falwell (discussed later on) was reacting to the perception that its constituents were about to lose power in an increasingly secular society. The Moral Majority had a political agenda[444] that it was determined to further.[445] By the late 1970s, the government tried to reduce the autonomy of fundamentalist institutions, which threatened an increasingly secular state[446] as interest groups engaged in lobbying.[447]

Neither the gay rights movement nor the right wing evangelical movement can be exclusively described as counter movements, as each engaged actively and persistently with the state to further its goals: the gay rights movement to obtain increased rights for homosexuals, and the evangelical right to fight against the liberalisation of American society in general. However, both groups did also engage actively in reaction to one another, including direct action intended to combat the other's aims. In particular, the well-resourced evangelical right was frequently successful in backing the gay rights movement into a corner, forcing it to engage in defensive action and deflecting it from actively pursuing its goals with all of its resources and energy.

THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT, THE EVANGELICAL RIGHT AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Clearly, the gay rights movement involves the collective engagement of individuals, groups and organisations working together to effect social change. Identity is also key. The same can be said of the evangelical right groups that set up in opposition to the gay rights and other liberal movements.

Whereas both the gay rights movement and the evangelical right sought to influence institutions and individuals in positions of power, the latter involved a set of beliefs in the

[444] Wilson, 2007: 15.
[445] Bruce, 1988: 85.
[446] Bruce, 1988: 22.
[447] For example, Hertzke 1988; Hofrenning, 1995.

supernatural, as well as specific, divinely-appointed rules for life, and the gay rights movement did not collectively subscribe to supernatural belief or to the idea of a comprehensive set of rules for living – although they did develop a set of complex goals that included the idea that gender roles should not be assumed, and a powerful emotive discourse around themes of legitimacy and equality.

Unlike the revolutionary social movements described in classical views of social movements, the gay rights movement did not seek to overthrow established political structures and replace them with a new, sympathetic government. Rather, they sought through sustained effort to gain recognition and support and the transformation, rather than abolition, of existing structures and political systems. After Stonewall (to be discussed later), the gay rights movement started to recruit members with approaches tried and tested by the civil rights and other left-wing movements,[448] and informed the general public about the movement, aware of the need for a more supportive external environment in order to achieve success.[449]

Working for gay rights did not necessarily have to involve any actual activism; simply living openly as a homosexual was enough when homosexuality itself was illegal in much of the United States. The gay rights social movement politicised "coming out," which now became a political act per se,[450] challenging the status quo, as homosexuals demanded equal rights. This took place in the context of a society that generally saw homosexuality as aberrant and wrong, that had legislated against any expressions of it, and that often acted brutally upon that legislation.

We can also use NSM theory to examine the gay rights movement of the 1970s, which was reacting to restrictive, discriminatory policies. In this way, it was very distant

[448] D'Emilio, 2003:33.
[449] McCarthy and Zald, 1977.
[450] D'Emilio, 2003: 35.

from established interest groups, and from the usual channels of representation of particular interest to the institutions which are lobbied to make change, while not primarily interested in economic and political power. If we look at the gay rights movement in terms of resource mobilisation, we can see clearly that it did not, in its early stages, have access to many resources, fiscal or organisational. However, it did benefit from the diversity of its members, as it spanned a spectrum of social and educational classes, and thus differed tangibly from movements predicated simply around a desire to transfer wealth from privileged to poorer classes. As we will see, over the course of Carter's presidency, the gay rights movement gained access to more cultural resources, as they adapted to the political mainstream, gained legitimacy from Carter's respectful treatment of activists and organisations, and became increasingly skilled and sophisticated in professional political activism.

The evangelical right in the US was a counter movement reacting to the growing trend towards liberalisation, manifested in the legalisation of abortion, increased women's rights, and the gay rights movement, among other factors. Clearly, the politicised evangelical right emerged as a counter movement in response to dramatic social change. The evangelical right and gay rights movement became embroiled in action and counteraction, and a complex relationship that has been described as "symbiotic"[451] and that has persisted, substantially unaltered.[452] In other words, each group came to exist largely in reaction to the other. However, the evangelical right was successful in limiting the resources of the gay rights movement. In positing the struggle against gay rights in terms of "protecting children" rather than extending rights to adults, it ensured that gay rights activists invested time and money in fighting accusations of child abuse rather than furthering their aims.[453]

[451] Bull and Gallagher, 1996: 266.
[452] Stone, 2016: 459.
[453] Stone, 2016: 462.

A crucial aspect of the gay rights movement, before, during, and after Carter's presidency, has been to forge the sense of a common identity and battle, bringing together a hugely disparate group of women and men, bridging social class, race, income and ethnicity. As the gay rights movement became more politically astute, and was increasingly recognised as a political force by mainstream politicians – starting with Carter – it gathered momentum, and what had once been aspirations gradually became official rights and recognition.

CONCLUSION

The gay rights movement and the evangelical right both emerged in their modern forms in the 1970s, fighting respectively for equal rights for homosexuals and against progressive liberal trends in society. To succeed in their aims, both social movements and interest groups depend on political bodies, including parties, as well as on mobilising a broad base of supporters, and are vulnerable to the potential that other outside groups will place pressure on political parties,[454] while counter movements are social movements that engage directly with one another and appeal to politicians and other elite groups for support.

Early scholarship in the field tended to see social movements as emotion-driven forms of collective behaviour, but in the second part of the twentieth century they were increasingly viewed as rational collective responses to social realities. Groups of people (like gay rights activists), who felt that they were excluded from access to power or rights, came together in an organised way to petition power brokers such as government. Theorists including Blumer, Parsons and Smelser introduced the idea that social movements can be a pragmatic and rational response to inequalities in society, sometimes portrayed as social "strain." Social movements are seen as a form of collective behaviour that seeks to create change within the established order, rather than impose it. Interest group theory, which overlaps significantly

[454] Wilson, 1991: 83.

with social movement theory, stresses the role of societal conflict in leading to the emergence of groups with specific goals in mind and also featured an analytical turn towards a focus on resources

NSM Theory, which emerged from the European experience, focused on the emergence of new types of social group, comparing them with earlier movements that had tended to be class-based. In the US context, the difference between "new" and "old" social movements was less clearly aligned with class, but there are parallels in terms of the way social movements in the 1970s challenged long-accepted hierarchies, such as the idea that heterosexual individuals and couples were naturally more deserving of human rights.

In the US, scholarship increasingly focused on Resource Mobilisation Theory, with social groups portrayed as jostling for access to resources, which could include fiscal and symbolic resources, with the latter including rights such as the right to be recognised and to legally engage in the sort of activities that most members of society take for granted.

Interest groups are centred in a core group of individuals who work towards creating change by means of contact with leaders responsible for policy.[455] Any association that attempts to influence the decisions taken by government is acting as an interest group.[456] Social movements, however, tend to arise when a portion of the electorate feels that its interests are not adequately represented in the party political system, as often happens in America's effectively two-party system, which can be perceived as excluding many. By and large, social movements are excluded from the party system,[457] leading to their engagement in political action that can be confrontational and designed to gain them recognition.[458] Social movements imply a more radical challenge to the existing parameters and interests of politics than interest groups. However, elements of the activities engaged in by both the gay rights

[455] Schwartz and Paul, 1992: 221.
[456] Knoke, 1986: 2.
[457] Scarrow, 1999; Tarrow, 1994; Rosenstone et al., 1996.
[458] Piven and Cloward, 2006.

movement and the evangelical right can be considered from the viewpoint of interest group theory, in particular in their more formal guise as organisations such as, respectively, the NGTF and the Moral Majority.

In response to emerging social groups, counter movements like the evangelical right, which based themselves in tradition and conservatism,[459] reacted against the changes that had occurred, and were continuing to occur, and which threatened their cultural hegemony.[460] In this way, the evangelical right emerged as a counter group that functioned largely in response to the emergence of social movements demanding progressive change, epitomised by the gay rights movement. While both attempted to influence government, the evangelical right, in particular, frequently engaged in direct attacks on the gay rights movement, forcing it into a defensive situation in which many resources were diverted to respond to the attack.

Social movement theory, with elements of interest group theory, sensitises us to important aspects of the gay rights movement under Carter, and Carter's role, as examined below. We gain insights into why the gay rights movement arose, how it evolved, and the relationships it developed with other actors in the field, including the government and the evangelical right, in its role as counter movement. For example, while clearly emotions often ran high among gay rights activists, their activism can be understood as an entirely rational response to the situation they were in – obliged to conceal their identity, or to abstain from romantic or sexual relationships if they wished to enjoy any access to the resources available to heterosexuals, including (but not confined to) access to public sector employment, political power, and the perception of respectability. Alongside other progressive movements, such as the women's liberation movement, gay rights activists challenged the traditional status quo in a struggle for access to more power, more recognition, and access to resources. At the same

[459] Eder, 1982: 873.
[460] Wilson, 2007: 255.

time, the movement had a keen focus on the framing of gay rights, and of homosexuals themselves, as ordinary members of society who had the moral right to the same entitlements as anybody else. While the evangelical right functioned as a counter-movement to a wide range of progressive interests, not just gay rights, the gay rights movement was an important factor in bringing members of the evangelical right together in their own battle for greater access to resources and, indeed, in their framing of themselves as warriors against what they saw as the growing degeneration of society.

In the course of the chapters that follow, we will look at ways in which the theories described here shed light on the course of gay rights during the presidency of Carter. We look at organisational structure in both the gay rights and the evangelical right movement, its impact on Carter's presidency and the White House, and at the crucial role of cultural framing in the development and successes of each. We will explore the ways the gay rights and the evangelical wing developed and grew in relation to one another. In the process, we will gain a keener understanding of the mechanisms, organisation and social trends that impacted on a particularly important era for gay rights in modern history.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF GAY RIGHTS IN THE 1976 US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Whereas the role of the evangelical right in the 1976 elections has been extensively examined in the literature, the same cannot be said of the role of the gay rights movement. Therefore, my main purpose in this chapter is to examine this topic. I will also briefly look at the role of the evangelicals, especially their response to Carter's overtures toward the gay community. Firstly, however, in order to better understand the political climate and environment of the time, I will examine the state of the Democratic Party and of American politics in general in the mid-1970s.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN THE 1970s

Carter stood for election at a difficult time for the Democratic Party and for America in general. During his campaign, he was actively petitioned by a range of interest groups, including the evangelical right and the gay rights movement. The gay rights movement was already looking to the Democratic Party for support,[461] while the evangelical right was slowly becoming more politicised. America was still reeling after the disastrous Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, and there was a general sense of dissatisfaction with political life and the broad cultural trends that then characterised American society. While the evangelical right yearned for a social order with clear, traditional gender roles, and firm ideas around patriotism and the place of religion in the home and state, a variety of progressive groups were striving towards ever-increased liberalism in society.

[461] Smith and Haider-Markel: 2002.

In order to understand the challenges facing Carter, we need to start by understanding the situation in which the Democratic Party found itself. The political scene in the mid-1970s was one of disarray. Although the Democratic Party had become involved in the broader civil rights movement, it also had a conflicted history because of the divisive Vietnam War. In a personal interview, Michael Dukakis, the Democrat nominee for the Presidency in 1988, former Governor of Massachusetts and, at the time of writing, Professor of Public Policy in UCLA, said that:

"The Vietnam War had a profound effect on Democrats. Many of us were strongly opposed to it, but it was a Democratic President that was responsible for it, and Democrats were bitterly divided about it… When you add the social movements and the civil rights revolution to the mix, it was pretty volatile. Remember, too, that the South had been overwhelmingly Democratic, largely because of the Civil War, and it was Lyndon Johnson who said when he signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, 'there goes the South.' He was right, and trying to win elections without the South was increasingly difficult. It is not an accident that we cracked it primarily with two southerners running for the presidency."[462]

The Democratic Party was "confused, divided, and disoriented" and "a fractious, quarrelsome lot, characterized by incongruous elements, conflicting goals, and a notable lack of discipline."[463] In embracing the civil rights movement, it had become less straightforwardly aligned with trade union and labour concerns. Beginning formally with the 1968 Chicago Convention,[464] the Party had experienced "the rise of an alternative coalition," crystallising around core liberal interest groups, including feminist and other reform organisations,[465] and around the need to see greater minority ethnic participation. These various movements and interest groups, such as civil rights and feminist began playing a

[462] 27 April 2014.
[463] Schafer, 1983: 126.
[464] http://www.jofreeman.com/polparties/polculture.htm.
[465] Shafer, 1983: 7-8.

major role in the Democratic Party. Professor Byron E. Shafer, Hawkins Chair of Political Science, University of Wisconsin–Madison, told the author that the role of these groups and movements – "civil rights first and foremost, but also environmentalism and women's rights"– had "a rather powerful general impact during the 1970s" in the shaping of the Democratic Party and politics in the USA. "Those movements were important both directly and indirectly to the Democratic Party of that era. Directly, they generated major new clusters of partisan activists inside the Democratic Party. Indirectly, they were part of the fuel for structural reforms within the party, which then facilitated these new activists."[466]

There was considerable opposition to these changes, especially at regional level,[467] and among organised labour officials, who had been very much at the heart of the Democratic Party.[468] Now organised labour was being pushed aside to make room for issue and group politics. In this category, the feminist movement emerged as a particularly important factor. Led by influential women such as Bella Abzug, a US Representative and a prominent figure of the Feminist Movement, feminists were actively pursuing greater representation for women at all levels.[469] Among Republicans, however, the environment for feminists was becoming more hostile, as anti-ERA campaigners such as Phyllis Schlafly gathered traction.[470]

By the early 1970s, the press and the public became aware of the changes taking place.[471] Blue-collar workers found themselves without an obvious choice to vote for; whereas the Democratic Party had traditionally represented blue-collar interests while the Republican Party represented white-collar interests, now both tended to reach out to various

[466] Professor Byron Shafer in a personal interview, 31 March 2014.
[467] Shafer, 1983: 157-9.
[468] Shafer, 1983: 253.
[469] Shafer, 1983: 466.
[470] http://www.jofreeman.com/polparties/feminfluence.htm.
[471] Shafer, 1983: 397.

white-collar interest groups,[472] giving rise to a higher incidence of cross-party voting. The scene was set for the emergence of a much greater focus on the individual personalities and policies of Presidential candidates. At the same time, a small number of gay rights activists and their supporters had started to make some inroads into politics, most famously Harvey Milk, who ran for city supervisor (and lost) in San Francisco in 1973, and who was subsequently appointed to the Board of Permit Appeals by the mayor of the city, George Moscone.[473]

However, gay politicians and their supporters were still seen as occupying "niche" territory, and had not been accepted into the mainstream. David Mack Henderson, a prominent gay activist and founder of Fairness Fort Worth, told the author that "awareness of gay activism was out there, but there was so much misinformation and scaremongering that the members of the general public often had just a hazy idea of what it was all about, and many of them were afraid of change."[474]

Professor Byron Shafer believes that without the reform process of the previous few years, Carter would have been a very unlikely choice.[475] Afterwards, Carter was an ideal candidate – ideological, pleasant, and available to a wide range of interest groups. The reform movement had shifted power and influence from important leaders in the Democratic Party to the party members, with primary elections now held at state level. Previously, only some states had held Presidential preference primaries, which had been seen as just advisory. Now, more states selected delegates via primary elections, enabling "outsider" candidates.[476]

[472] Shafer, 1983: 530.
[473] Foss, 1994: 8.
[474] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[475] Professor Byron Shafer in a personal interview, 31 March 2014.
[476] Walz and Comer, 1999: 189-208.

Carter, who also benefited from the growing general interest in southern culture,[477] campaigned everywhere, competing in as many states as possible.[478]

Following the Watergate debacle and the short presidency of Gerald Ford, who had assumed office with no public mandate, Carter presented himself as a candidate who could be "all things to all people,"[479] a goal which, according to D.F. Hahn, reflected his tendency to be "fuzzy" and "vague."[480] American voters were looking for someone they could trust and respect, and Carter's campaign was built around suggesting that *he* was that man: "He constructed a narrative as the unblemished outsider, the hero who could rescue and restore, relying frequently on the stump on words, such as "integrity," "dedication," "courage," "compassion," "trust," "Christian," "highest ideals," "trustworthy," "honesty," "openness," "fairness," "pure," "personal sacrifice," "prayer," "purpose," "conviction," and so on. In one repeated and characteristic statement Carter proclaimed, "With the shame of Watergate still with us and our 200th birthday just ahead, it is time for us to reaffirm and to strengthen our ethical and spiritual and political beliefs."[481]

Professor Shafer told the author that "reform politics was an enabling but not a decisive influence on the Carter nomination. In one sense, only Watergate can explain the Carter 'accidency'; I can conceive no other environment that would have produced his presidency. On the other hand, without the reforms, the organized party might still have successfully resisted the Carter surge."[482]

[477] Schulman, 2001: 106.
[478] Apple (*The New York Times*) 21 January 1975: 17, "Complex Rules on Picking Delegates Alter Shape of Democrats' '76 Nomination Drive."
[479] Hogue, 2012: 101.
[480] Hahn, 1984: 266.
[481] Hogue, 2010: 101.
[482] Professor Byron Shafer in a personal interview, 31 March 2014.

THE 1976 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

During Carter's campaign, interest groups representing both the evangelical right and gay rights activists were very active, while Carter had assembled an experienced campaign staff that engaged with all of his constituents, including those that were viewed with disfavour by the evangelical right.[483] While gay rights groups were broadly aligned with women's liberation and other causes, those against tended to be associated with religious demographics, in particular with the various evangelical faiths. Catholics were also interested in Carter's campaign, while anxious about his views on abortion, which they opposed. Carter stressed his opinion that state funds should not be spent on abortions for low-income women.[484]

Throughout his campaign, Carter sought to placate his conservative Christian supporters while also reaching out to the liberal left. Earlier in his political career, Carter had paid relatively little attention to interest groups and, even after his campaign, began his term with no clear plan for them or intention to engage with them.[485] He came under pressure from both supporters and opponents of controversial issues, including abortion and the ERA (Carter considered the latter a fundamental cornerstone of human rights that would give the US the moral authority to place human rights centre stage in its foreign policy).[486]

American disillusionment with administrations that had led the country into dubious military adventures overseas synced with Carter's view that these had sprung from a lack of focus on human rights issues in US foreign policy.[487] From as early as 1974, Carter had put human rights centre-stage in his campaign, saying at the formal announcement of his candidacy that he wished to "see this country return to the high standards and ideals on which

[483] Flippen, 2011: 61.
[484] Broder (*The Washington Post*), 9 September 1976: A1. "Carter: Efforts to Court Catholics Gains Democrat Hit Paydirt Courting Catholic Vote."
[485] Wilson, 1981: ix.
[486] Clark, 2011: 1151.
[487] Carter, 1981: 141-2.

it was founded."[488] His administration, Carter said, would be committed to addressing human rights issues, including torture, religious freedom, discrimination against minorities, and the denial of emigration rights.[489] Professor of Public Policy Mark J. Rozell told the author that "The 1970s represented a turning point for such groups (gay rights and evangelicals). After the Watergate scandal and the end of the US war in Vietnam, it appeared to many that the political Left was on the rise. Liberal interest groups pushed their agendas hard and gathered most of the attention at the time while evangelical conservatives were mobilizing at the grass roots and were going largely unnoticed by the mainstream culture. Carter was the beneficiary electorally of the convergence of political activism by civil rights and liberties groups and the rise of evangelical political activism. Naturally, groups on the Left aligned with the Democratic nominee in 1976, and so did many White southern Baptists who were proud of the success of an openly born-again politician."[490]

Carter's Promise

Carter's campaign focused on the new qualities that he would bring to the White House: "… [it] built upon the electorate's disenchantment towards 'politics,' and he offered the voters hope that things would be better under his leadership. His campaign theme stressed 'a government as good and as honest and as decent and as competent and as compassionate and as filled with love as are the American people,' and he promised to restore the trust of the people in their government. Along with this theme of trust and good government was his promise to restore leadership to a Nation that he portrayed as having been drifting aimlessly during the past decade."[491]

[488] Hargrove, 1988: 111.
[489] Committee on House Administration, 1978: 712-3. In Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Jimmy Carter, 1977, Book I. JCPL.
[490] Professor Mark J. Rozell in a personal interview, 12 March 2014.
[491] Krukones, 1985: 137.

For the Democrats, Carter represented the opportunity to gain votes among the more conservative, while not alienating the Party's liberal base.[492] The possibility of Carter as President brought with it the prospect of a renewed respect for public avowals of faith in high office. However, this did not reassure all Americans of faith. Catholics, many traditionally working class Democrat voters, were anxious about Carter. They had become increasingly integrated into the political mainstream, especially since the election of Irish-American Catholic John F Kennedy in 1960, but their position on social matters such as abortion and denominational education, and the lingering antipathy between Catholics and evangelicals, compromised the Catholic vote.[493]

Carter believed that the 1960s had represented a watershed period in politics, as a result of which it had become essential for the people to become much more directly involved.[494] According to Stephen Skowronek, a prominent political scientist, Carter endeavoured to become "a liberal to liberals, a moderate to moderates, and a conservative to the conservatives."[495] While he believed that the concept of human rights was rooted in Judeo-Christianity, he was committed to its universality, arguing that America's own experience of the civil rights movements and foreign affairs demonstrated the importance of sound moral principles in both domestic and foreign policies.[496] While Carter discussed human rights in his election campaign, he tended to use more cautious language than he would employ after the election, using what William Steding,[497] has described as "relatively obscure terms" such as "humanitarian aspirations."[498]

[492] *The Baptist Standard*, 8 September 1976, "Demo Record Rated Superior." Box 152. Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.
[493] Moore, 2010: 185.
[494] Hargrove, 1988: 9.
[495] Skowronek, 1993: 375.
[496] Carter, 1982: 142.
[497] Author of the *Presidential Faith and Foreign Policy*.
[498] 2014: 44.

With the help of Hamilton Jordan, who had served as a staff member during Carter's period as governor, Carter entered the race with a number of assumptions. He believed that he could do well in the primary elections (now more numerous and more important as a result of the reforms); that George Wallace, the other southern contender, would not do well; that Carter's "outsider" image would be a strength; and that voters would respond positively to a candidate whose personal qualities of integrity and trustworthiness were stressed.[499] Carter was correct on all these points.

Carter's Views on Homosexuality and Gay Rights during his Campaign

Carter was also the only candidate in the 1976 elections to publically oppose discrimination against homosexuals.[500] In his election campaign, Carter had been consistent in his message that homosexuals should not be abused or harassed, and in his view that he did not have the right to "cast the first stone" when it came to matters of sexual morality.[501] Carter stated his view that *all* pre-marital sexual contact was sinful – by implication including homosexual sexual activity while also considering it "not worse" than other sexual sins – but also his view that it was neither desirable nor feasible to attempt to police the private sexual behaviour of consenting adults.[502]

Perhaps his most explicit and clear-cut consideration of homosexuality is elucidated in his 1976 pre-election interview with *Playboy* magazine: "Committing adultery, according to the Bible – which I believe in – is a sin. For us to hate one another, for us to have sexual intercourse outside marriage, for us to engage in homosexual activities, for us to steal, for us to lie, these are all sins. But Jesus teaches us not to judge other people. We don't assume the

[499] Wheeler, 1976: ix.
[500] Bush (*The Advocate*), 12 June 1980: 2. "The Carter Administration. More Done Than Said?" NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[501] NGTF Press Release. 23 May 1976. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[502] *People*. No Date. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 47, CU.

role of a judge and say to another human being, 'You're condemned because you commit sins.' All Christians, all of us, acknowledge that we are sinful and that judgment comes from God, not from another human being… The issue of homosexuality always makes me nervous. It is obviously one of the major issues in San Francisco. I don't have any, you know, personal knowledge about homosexuality and I guess being a Baptist, that would contribute to a sense of being uneasy." Eventually, goaded by the reporter, Carter added, "I can't change the teachings of Christ. I believe in them and a lot of people do in this country, as well." Carter also stressed his view that law enforcement should move away from what he considered "victimless crimes" and pointed to efforts he had made in that area as governor of Georgia, where alcoholism was decriminalised and the penalties attached to the use of marijuana liberalised. He also stated that homosexuals had attended his church and that there had been a degree of embarrassment but no harassment or animosity.[503]

Carter set out his plainly supportive position on lesbian and gay rights on March 19, 1976 during an interview for "*The Tomorrow Show*," when he said, "I favour the end of harassment or abuse or discrimination against homosexuals." However, he also sounded a warning, pointing out that homosexuals in sensitive positions would be particularly vulnerable to blackmail and that this might place America's security in danger.[504] He would maintain this position throughout his presidency.

Carter was also unequivocal in his official correspondence on the matter of whether or not homosexual Americans merited human rights, responding (via a staff member) to one letter written to him prior to his election in 1976 with the clear statement, "Governor Carter is firmly opposed to discrimination in all forms including affectional preference. As President

[503] *Playboy.* November 1976. Jimmy Carter Interview.
[504] Transcript of Jimmy Carter discussing homosexuality with Tom Snyder on the *Tomorrow Show* on NBC television, 29 March 1976. Gay Rights Jimmy Carter's Views On. 10/76 O/A 5772. JCPL.

he will work to eliminate it."[505] In a letter to Jean O'Leary, one of the Directors in the Board of the NGTF, another staff member stated that while "Governor Carter is not entirely comfortable with homosexuality for personal reasons," he nonetheless "has strongly expressed his feeling that homosexuals should not be singled out for special harassment, abuse or discrimination."[506] Peter Bourne told the author that Carter was very comfortable with homosexuals and was very well aware that several members of his staff were gay and had no issue with that.[507] By and large, Carter's views on homosexuality seem to have remained consistent throughout his presidency, although his willingness to speak openly about them experienced a shift in the face of the onslaught from the evangelical right, as we shall see.

Midge Costanza

In a highly significant move for the gay community, Carter invited Margaret "Midge" Costanza (they had been friendly since his support of her unsuccessful run for Congress in 1974), an Italian-American Catholic, feminist, avid supporter of gay rights and former vice-mayor of Rochester, New York, to join his campaign,[508] giving her great responsibility in the Democratic Party and his election campaign.[509] Costanza had been committed to the issue of gay rights since 1973, when she had run for city council in New York and had attended a meeting with a gay student group from the University of Rochester.[510] During her run, Carter had gone two or three times to New York to campaign for her.[511] She had been an ardent

[505] Letter from Charles Cabot to Christopher Larkin, 12 March 1976. Gay Rights: Publications, 3/75-1/78 (O/A 5771), 03/1975 - 01/1978. JCPL.
[506] Letter from Robert B. Havely to Jean O'Brien, 4 October 1976. Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[507] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.
[508] Flippen, 2011: 84.
[509] Mattingly, 2016: 64.
[510] Clendinen and Nagourney, 1999: 271.
[511] Midge Costanza interview to Ashley Boyd. 2010. Midge Costanza Archives. Midge Constanza Institute (cited hereafter as MCI).

feminist since being voted to the Rochester City Council with the most votes. Traditionally in Rochester, the candidate who received the most votes was declared mayor, but on the night of Costanza's election, the male councilmen called a late-night vote to change the policy as they did not wish to have a female mayor – hence the honorary title of "Vice Mayor." From this period on, Costanza had been firmly committed to feminism, and began to forge alliances with feminist organisations. The same year, on learning of bias against gay business owners in her area, Costanza gave her support to a movement to ban discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.[512]

Costanza played a crucial role in Carter's election campaign, by having made speeches in his support, having appointed people to different positions in his team, and accompanying Carter on his tours all over the country.[513] Costanza was a raconteur who found it easy to approach people, and she had a lot of success in introducing the relatively unknown Southern politician to the electorate in the North, where it was harder for him to gain votes. She was particularly successful in selling him to people from the same sort of working-class background as herself. Carter asked Costanza to second his nomination, which she did by telling her own life story. Considering Costanza's progressive views on abortion and gay rights, this was a strong statement on Carter's part.[514]

For Carter, one appeal of hiring Costanza was to demonstrate to liberal voters that he was committed to a fair America, and part of a broader strategy to build support in every state. Costanza must had noted Carter's overtures to the gay community, such as his comments to gay rights activist and founder of the Metropolitan Community Church Troy Perry that intimated his willingness to ban discrimination towards homosexuals in most areas of public life. While there were many differences between Costanza and Carter, they

[512] Mattingly, 2016: 70.
[513] Midge Costanza interview to Ashley Boyd. 2010. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[514] Mattingly, 2016: 67-76.

respected each other greatly, and she was attracted to his message of human rights for all, his strong pro-women stance, and the likelihood that, under a Carter presidency, the situation for homosexuals would improve. In appointing Costanza, who was a very vocal supporter of gay rights, Carter was also signalling to the wider public that being in favour of gay rights was no barrier to engagement in the highest levels of politics.

THE 1976 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

The Democratic Party initially seemed very suspicious of Carter, who was hard to pin down; "fiscally conservative but racially liberal."[515] However, by the time of the Democratic Convention in 1976, he had largely won it over, and the convention "was perhaps the most unified for a generation."[516] Whereas the Convention often took place before candidate selection, Carter had been chosen several weeks before. He made his acceptance speech at the Convention on July 15, stressing the need to return to the "lasting and simple moral values" that he considered to represent the nation's origins, and urging Americans to depend on the "nobility of ideas."[517] Carter had decided to run with Walter Mondale as Vice-President, partly because he was impressed with Mondale's credentials in the area of human rights.[518]

Carter had fielded many questions about his views on homosexuality in the period leading up to the Democratic National Convention. Early in 1972, Carter had made statements that indicated his support for gay rights, although later that year he stopped short of supporting a plank.[519] By the time of the Convention, he was confident that he would be nominated and anxious that controversial issues such as homosexuality (which he viewed as a subset of human rights generally rather than a singular issue) should not disrupt the event.[520]

[515] Stanley, 2010: 22.
[516] Stanley, 2010: 23.
[517] Committee on House Administration, 1978: 275.
[518] Stroud, 1977: 324.
[519] Smith and Haider-Markel, 2002: 149.
[520] Flippen, 2011: 84.

His gay supporters pressed him to put in place a platform plank that would endorse rights for homosexuals specifically, but Carter's campaign resisted, presumably because they were aware of how this would be seen by evangelical right voters. Virginia "Ginny" Apuzzo, an executive director of the NGTF at the time, was also "organizing the lesbian and gay community around the Democratic Platform Committee Hearings taking place around the country to testify about the importance of including a 'gay rights plank' that would provide equal protection under civil rights law." However, during the final drafting procedures in Washington, D.C., in 1976, while she was lobbying the draft committee members, she told the author that she was "explicitly told by Carter's campaign leadership that we were 'an embarrassment to Candidate Carter.'"[521]

O'Leary protested to Costanza in person about Carter's rejection of the gay rights plank, and Costanza took the protest to Stuart Eizenstat, one of Carter's top political advisors. Eizenstat's response illuminates how politicians then saw the issue of gay rights, which was still far from a mainstream political issue in the mid-1970s: "Midge, let's do what we have to for the gay rights movement, but let's do it after we get to the White House. For God's sake, don't let us carry this albatross going into the election. We have to win this election."[522] In the event, as stated above, the Convention did not adopt a platform in favour of rights for homosexual men and women.[523]

Throughout the Convention, Carter's evangelical identity was on display, such as when he and Martin Luther King Sr. took the stage together to sing "How Great Thou Art," uniting civil rights and evangelical Christianity.[524] While Carter was comfortable talking

[521] Ginny Apuzzo in a personal interview, 22 June 2017.
[522] Clendinen and Nagourney, 1999: 277.
[523] Flippen, 2011: 85. This was not the first time that representatives of the gay rights movement had approached the Democratic National Convention; they had also done so in 1972, when McGovern received the party nomination and made statements in support of gay rights, as well as giving gay rights activists the unprecedented opportunity to speak at the Convention (Williams, 2003: 127).
[524] Miller, 2013: 91.L

about his personal religion, he never used it for "personal political ends," but rather as a platform to show who he really was.[525] Nevertheless, some commentators compared the Convention to a revival meeting. Carter's campaign has been compared to that of John F. Kennedy. Kennedy's election had been seen as representing America's acceptance of its Catholic community and was a huge win for Irish Americans. Many hoped that Carter's election would do for the evangelicals what Kennedy's had done for Catholics.[526]

Carter also made a point about racial equality and ecumenism when he attended a Black Presbyterian church in New York.[527] Carter had striven to show his commitment to civil rights for Black Americans, including one event at which he appeared on stage alongside Coretta King, the widow of Martin Luther King Jr. and an important civil rights activist in her own right. In response, the NGTF made an explicit comparison between civil rights for Black Americans and civil rights for homosexual Americans, saying in a letter to Carter: "For many of us, the most moving moment of the 1976 Democratic National Convention was the sight of you and Coretta King, two gentlepeople from the American South, celebrating an end to second-class citizenship for our nation's largest minority, rejoicing in the decline of an old national madness, hatred for and oppression of human beings because of the colour of their skin. We invite you to become champion for first-class citizenship for this nation's second-largest minority. We invite you to welcome and encourage the decline of an even older madness, hatred for and oppression of human beings because they have acknowledged their capacity to love other human beings of the same sex."[528]

[525] Letter from Phil Strickland to Jimmy Carter, 12 March 1976. Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[526] Reichley, 1987: 78.
[527] Stroud, 1977: 316.
[528] Letter from the NGTF to Governor Carter, 18 August 1976. Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

Cleverly, the NGTF also crafted their letter in a way intended to appeal to Carter's love of Scripture, saying:

"You believe that Christianity is alive in our times because you see that its message contains what you are striving for in yourself: the capacity to embody goodness and love and to put these qualities to work in the service of an ideal. But Jesus knew that the first step in putting love to work is finding the truth. And Jesus knew that dogma gets in the way of an expanding truth. The truth is that St Paul's injunctions against homosexuals are not more valid than his injunctions for slaves to stay with their masters. The truth is that gay men and women are no more or less likely to be truthsayers or liars, rightdoers or 'sinners' than any other human beings. The truth is that you cannot continue to see us as wayward, immoral people and still be committed to our full and equal rights."[529]

A women's caucus was held every morning at the Convention, and various women's organisations, as well as anti-abortion groups, held rallies to coincide with the event. Feminist issues emerged as the major topic, in particular demands for equal representation through affirmative action. Although various pledges had been made to improve women's representation in the Convention, they were still considerably underrepresented. Ethnic minority groups, such as Latinos and Blacks, echoed their call for more equal representation.[530]

Gay rights activist, political scientist and author, Jo Freeman, attending the convention, noted that women activists were impressed by Carter, who had realised that, if he was serious about including more women in government, he would have to look beyond the usual male candidates for advice and nominations.[531] According to Freeman, "Carter's willingness to negotiate with representatives selected by the women's caucus impressed them

[529] Letter from the NGTF to Governor Carter, 18 August 1976. Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[530] http://www.jofreeman.com/conventions/DemCon1976.htm, retrieved 25 November, 2014
[531] Babayak (*The New York Times*), 22 January 1978. "All the President's Women."

and the other women delegates. This was the first time a Presidential candidate had seriously talked with them on their own terms. The outsider to the Washington establishment had made them feel like insiders. They began to feel that he could be trusted."[532]

Carter, who had already supported limited abortion, made commitments to making the ERA central to his campaign, and to passing it if elected; and to appointing women to cabinet posts, possibly including the Supreme Court. In response, the Democratic Women's Caucus offered to "set up a talent bank of women listing their areas of expertise for consideration of key posts." Carter also started to take steps to deal with discrimination at work, for women and other minorities.[533]

Undoubtedly, the NGTF, at the time was the most prominent of the gay rights organisation, which adopted a coherent strategy to enlarge the gay rights movement by drawing both militant activists and the conservative members into the pool.[534] During the Presidential Campaign of 1976, it had unsuccessfully attempted to include gay rights in the Democratic and Republican Party programmes.[535] While a gay rights plank was considered, on the basis that Carter had said that he opposed discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, it did not find enough support among the delegates, as only three were openly homosexual, and Carter eventually did not support it either.[536] It must be noted here that four years later in the Democratic Convention of 1980, a gay rights plank would be included and be supported by Carter, while the number of openly homosexual delegates would rise from three to seventy-seven,[537] clearly verifying a significant progress made with regards to gay rights during Carter's presidency.

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[532] http://www.jofreeman.com/conventions/DemCon1976.htm, retrieved 25 November, 2014
[533] Ibid.
[534] Bruce Voeller, draft of position paper for NGTF, January 1975. NGTF records, Box 6, Folder 1, CU.
[535] "NGTF Lobbies Democrats for Gay Rights Plank." *News from NGTF.* Press Release. 8 June 1976. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 1. CU.
[536] Leavitt (*The Blade*), 7 August 1980: 1, "Convention Strategy to Seek Mainstream Power."
[537] Wadler (*The Washington Post*), 29 August 1980: 17, "Lobbyist Finds Gay Rights an Uncomfortable Issue on Hill."

Gay rights activists held a march on the Sunday of the convention, and "600 delegates or alternates signed a declaration of support."[538] There were some suggestions of attempts to keep gay rights activists out of the limelight. O'Leary attending the Convention "had spent several frustrating days trying to get a caucus meeting room large enough to hold 100 people. Give us a list of 100 delegates who want to attend, she was told, and we'll give you the room. Other caucuses did not have this demand made of them." Ultimately, gay rights activists were given a room inadequate to their needs, and requiring passes to enter, whereas other groups could hold open conventions.[539]

Despite the frustrations faced by gay right activists at the Convention, the presence of Costanza as Carter's aide encouraged them and gave some visibility to their cause and needs. The fact that feminists were also taken seriously for the first time was also a positive sign of Carter's intentions with respect to human rights and equality. Professor of Women's Studies Charlotte Bunch, in a personal interview, highlighted the importance of Carter supporting equal rights for women, stating that it was "a hopeful sign, and people like Midge who had worked on his campaign led us to feel that… the human rights perspective that Carter stood for, which of course has been clearer in his later years, was so strong that we could… hope for more."[540]

Tom Hayden, the renowned anti-war activist who ran for the Democratic nomination for the US Senate from California, told the author that "the feminist presence (in the Convention) was very visible and this was due to Carter. I don't remember anything being said about gay rights, but the presence of Costanza in Carter's side, certainly created a lot of expectations."[541] Michael Dukakis who had also attended the Convention, emphasised in a

[538] NGTF Press Release. "National Gay Task Force Deplores Defeat of Gay Rights Plank by Democratic Party Platform Committee." 15 June 1976. NGTF records,Box 36, Folder 1. CU.
[539] http://www.jofreeman.com/conventions/DemCon1976.htm, retrieved 25 November, 2014
[540] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014
[541] Tom Hayden in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.

personal interview the role of gay rights and feminist activists in the Convention and the subsequent election, "unquestionably, all of these forces were very much a part of the 1976 election both at the convention and in the final [elections]."[542]

Gay Rights Activists in Carter's Campaign

Shortly before the Democratic Convention, thousands of advocates for gay rights marched in New York on a route that took them past the site of the Stonewall Riot of 1969. Amid considerable media attention, one journalist wrote that, "The love that dare not speak its name now can't seem to keep its mouth shut."[543] Although groups like the Mattachine Society had made some forays into political activism, America had never before seen such a focused attempt on the part of gay activists to make their voices heard in the political arena.[544] Whereas earlier activists had taken a revolutionary stance, even aligning themselves ideologically with the Vietcong,[545] now there was an effort on the part of activists to gain rights within the current political structure, building on earlier efforts begun by organisations such as the Gay Activist Alliance,[546] many of whose members would go on to have important roles in the NGTF.[547]

By the time of Carter's campaign in 1976, there had already been some gains, such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in a number of states,[548] and the passage of the first gay rights legislation when the city council of East Lansing in Michigan (followed shortly after by Ann Arbor) approved an act that declared that the city should employ the best applicant for any vacancy regardless of a number of characteristics, including

[542] Professor Michael Dukakis in a personal interview, 27 April 2014.
[543] *The New York Times*, 30 March 1976: 1. NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[544] D'Emilio, 1983: 67; Hall, 2011, 30.
[545] Fejes, 2008: 33.
[546] Gosse, 2005: 33; Bernstein, 1997: 544.
[547] Rimmerman, 2002: 27.
[548] Flippen, 2011: 35.

homosexuality.[549] In July 1972, Jim Foster was the first gay delegate to address a presidential nominating convention when he spoke at the Democratic National Convention. When candidate George McGovern endorsed gay rights the same month, he was denounced by prominent members of the Democratic Party.[550] Clearly, general acceptance of gays, and their own realisation as a voting bloc, had certainly not yet come about.

After the Democratic Convention, Carter instigated a committee dedicated to increasing women's voices in his campaign, the 51.3% Committee, referring to the female percentage of the American population.[551] Then Carter took a very important step towards a more inclusive approach to gay Americans by appointing three openly gay women to the 51.3% Committee.[552] They were Jean O'Leary, Josephine Daly of the San Francisco Human Rights Committee and that city's first lesbian Police Commissioner, and Elaine Noble, a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Carter's campaign issued a press release pointing out that this was "the first time that a known gay person has been appointed to an important national advisory committee." [553] Carter was quite clear that he felt that rights for homosexual Americans were very much a matter of concern for any would-be American President.[554]

However, Carter's announcement of the 51.3% Committee received minimal press coverage; it was not covered at all in the vast majority of newspapers as gay rights was not considered an important issue at the time. Thus it went unnoticed by most Americans.[555] Even so, the 51.3% Committee played a very active role in the Presidential campaign,

[549] Cook, 1999: 679.
[550] http://glbtqarchive.com/ssh/democratic_party_S.pdf Retrieved 17 January 2017.
[551] News Release, 14 October 1976. Midge Costanza files, Folder: Family Planning and Abortion [O/A 4497], Box 22. JCPL.
[552] News from NGTF. Press Release: 'Lesbians Appointed to Carter/Mondale 51.3% Committee.' 15 October 1976. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 1, CU.
[553] NGTF Press Release, 14 October 1976, Folder: Gays, Box 22, JCPL; California Gays for Carter, 1976 election folder. JCPL.
[554] Northern Californian Headquarters, Democratic Presidential Campaign Committee. Gay Rights; Jimmy Carter's Views on, October 1976. Betty Rainwater's Press Office Subject Files, Container 417. JCPL.
[555] Mattingly, 2016: 81.

establishing branches in every American state and in many counties,[556] and advertising in publications aimed at a female readership, stating that "Jimmy Carter feels it's time your government did something positive to end discrimination against women."[557]

As well as working for the 51.3% Committee, O'Leary – at Costanza's urging and Carter's approval– joined Carter's team and campaigned for him among the gay community in New York. This solidified the idea of the gay community as one that could use its vote to express unity and to work towards better representation in politics.[558] O'Leary would work very hard on the campaign and she organised the gay community in New York for Carter.[559] She obtained many votes for Carter among the gay community by communicating to them that he was open to dialogue with them, and to dealing with their concerns. O'Leary and Costanza also became very close at this time. They agreed on a wide range of issues and were both highly visible gay rights activists.[560] After his victory in the elections, Carter wrote to O'Leary thanking her for her support and intimating the great things that could now be achieved for women, but without mentioning gay rights.[561]

Louie Crew, member of the board of directors of the NGTF at the time, said in a personal interview about O'Leary's appointment: "her appointment was very important for us. Having an open lesbian and one of the NGTFs directors appointed by the Presidential nominee was of major significance for us. We felt that we could make our voices heard. Most importantly, it was obvious to us and to everyone that Carter was against discrimination against homosexuals."[562]

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[556] Press release of Carter/Modale Campaign. 20 September 1976. 1976 Presidential Campaign. 51.3% Folder. JCPL.
[557] 51.3% ad. n.d. 1976 Presidential Campaign. 51.3% Folder. JCPL.
[558] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[559] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[560] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014
[561] Letter from Cooki Lutkefedder to Jean O'Leary, 12 November 1976. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[562] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.

On the appointments of Costanza and O'Leary and on their contributions in campaigning for Carter, Jeffrey Montgomery, an LGBT activist and the founding executive director of Triangle Foundation, a gay and civil rights organization in Michigan, told the author: "Yes, I believe it was a vital point because Carter proved by appointing them that he did not care about the people's sexual preferences and that all were equal to his eyes. I think it was also a symbolic move; if the President has appointed a gay then it is OK for us to do so to and that kind of thing. I was quite surprised, to tell you the truth, by Carter's actions as I thought he was very conservative, but it was a very pleasant surprise."[563]

On the same topic, Eddie Sandifer, a gay veteran, member of the Mattachine Society and founder of the Mississippi Gay Alliance, told the author that "Carter's approach to the movement and the appointments of Costanza and O'Leary certainly played an important role in the growth of the movement. It was a major statement to us [and] to everyone in the USA that he was not afraid to appoint an open homosexual to his team. You know, the 1970s might seem like a time when a lot of people came out and things started getting better for us, but it was not as rosy as some people might think. There was a lot of hostility and harassment by prominent Americans like Anita Bryant, Pat Boone and others. Carter had a lot of courage to take such a stance."[564]

Carter Seeks the Gay Vote

Then, Carter did something that had been unthinkable before. He advertised in gay and lesbian publications, apparently an unprecedented step for a Presidential candidate. Carter assured homosexual readers that, despite his deep religious convictions, he did not "believe in legislating morals"[565] and assured them that he "opposed all forms of discrimination on the

[563] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview 25 February 2016.
[564] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.
[565] Advertisement for Carter's 1976 campaign, September 1976, Folder: Gay Rights, Box 7. JCPL.

basis of sexual orientation."[566] In this way, Carter was the first Presidential nominee to reach out so explicitly to the gay community, assuring them that he would not discriminate against them, and that he valued them as voters and as citizens. It was a daring thing to do in the face of rising opposition to the gay rights cause, and a powerful message to the gay community as a whole. This was also an important act of cultural framing in which he showed that one did not have to personally accept homosexual acts in order to accept homosexuals, and to accept their concerns as a valid matter for government. This contributed to Carter's endorsement by a number of gay rights leaders.

Eddie Sandifer said in a personal interview about Carter's advertisements in gay publications: "Seeing Carter's ads in the gay press was really quite unexpected, quite a shock even. This was something that was never done before, as far as I can tell. Politicians were not advertising themselves in such publications, not even those who were gay. It was certainly very important. We were all very surprised to see the US President Nominee placing advertisements in the gay press but it was a pleasant surprise. It must have taken President Carter a lot of courage to do it, considering the volatile atmosphere at the time, but it certainly sent out a big message."[567] Donald Hallman, a gay veteran who had been dishonourably discharged from the Army on grounds of his homosexuality in the 1950s and prominent gay rights activist, told the author that Carter's relatively progressive stance encouraged gays to vote for him, and to become more politically active: "I don't remember seeing any Carter's advertisements in gay magazines, but I clearly remember everyone talking about Carter's open approach to the gay community and the appointments of Costanza and O'Leary in his staff. These initiatives certainly convinced most of the

[566] Press release from Gay Review, no date available but presumed October 1976 because of text. Gay Rights Publications 3/75-1/78, (O/A 5771) 03/1975-01/1978, Container 4, JCPL; Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014; Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016; Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.
[567] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.

homosexuals, if not all, to vote for him... It certainly also encouraged people to become active with the movement."[568]

In terms of attracting gay voters, Carter may have also benefited from the apparently anti-gay views of one of the other Democratic candidates. Senator Henry Jackson faced hecklers at one of his campaign speeches and lashed out, saying, "Go on and have your own rally. Our people want hard work. We don't want gay work. We don't want gay jobs. You just do your own thing and stay away."[569] Carter, instead, repeatedly stated that he did an excellent job at keeping his personal and political views separate, and that there was no conflict between his private religious life and his position in politics.[570] The implication was that, regardless of his views on homosexuality (described in a personal interview with Eric Marcus as a likely cause of conflict for a President who was also a conservative Christian)[571] they had no bearing on matters of state.

During his campaign in Los Angeles, Carter was questioned by a gay minister, Troy Perry of the Metropolitan Community Church, a prominent gay rights activist who noted that while many churches were very vocal in their opposition to gay rights, many religious people felt otherwise.[572] Perry wanted to know if he would "ban discrimination in four areas: the military, housing, immigration, and civilian contracts that required security clearance."[573] Carter affirmed that he had no problem with the first three areas, and had reservations against the fourth only when the person in question was not openly homosexual and would therefore be vulnerable to blackmail, with implications for national security. Following this meeting, Perry made his support for Carter clear, saying, "I am strongly supporting Jimmy Carter

[568] Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.
[569] *The New York Times*: 4 April 1976. NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[570] Press Release, 23 May 1976, Carter Speaks out on Gay Rights. Stuart Eizenstat's Subject Files, Gay Rights, Container 18. JCPL.
[571] Eric Marcus in a personal interview, 18 February 2015.
[572] Agenda, NGTF Meeting, 26 March 1977. Folder: National Gay Task Force Correspondence 9/76-2/78, O/A 4499. JCPL.
[573] Flippen, 2011: 83.

because of his commitment to civil rights for all people and because of his opposition to non-job related employment discrimination." [574]

Counsellors Lyon and Martin, both lesbians, also made a strong statement in Los Angeles in support of Carter, saying, "As lesbians and as women, we support Jimmy Carter for President because of his strong stand on the ERA, because he is committed to appointing women to key positions in his administration and because he supports gay civil rights."[575] These comments were all repeated shortly afterwards in a press release from Carter's campaign, showing his intention to reach out directly to as many homosexual voters as possible.[576]

Encouraged by the signals coming from Carter's Presidential campaign, a group known as Gays for Carter emerged. Gays for Carter felt that the only way in which change would happen was if gay rights activists worked within the system, and they asked that Carter, if he was elected, make an Executive Order that would ban anti-gay discrimination in every area under the President's jurisdiction, including in the military.[577] Another group, California Gay People for Carter-Mondale, led by lesbian activists, supported Carter on the basis that if the Republicans got in there would be no hope at all for progressive social change.[578] The group focused on reassuring gay voters who were unconvinced of Carter's commitment to their cause by stressing his strong belief in the separation of church and state[579] (in other words, pointing out that Carter's personal religious views should not impact his performance as President), and by deflecting interest from his strong personal religious beliefs and presumed private views on homosexuality. The group wrote to Carter's campaign,

[574] News Release. California Gays for Carter. 1976 election folder. JCPL.
[575] California Gays for Carter, no date. 1976 election folder. JCPL.
[576] California Gays for Carter, n.d. 1976 election folder. JCPL.
[577] Official Statement by "Gays for Carter," 15 July1976, Folder: Gay Rights, Box 7. JCPL.
[578] "California Gay People for Carter-Mondale," n.d. Folder: Gay Rights, Box 7. JCPL.
[579] Press Release. Gays for Carter, August 1976, Folder: Gay Rights, Box 7. JCPL.

stating its belief that America was "ready for gay liberation" and its ability to reach out to gay voters, including those who were still in the closet.[580]

Carter tried to extend a hand to gay activists without jeopardising support from evangelicals. During his father's campaign, Carter's son Chip toured around San Francisco with members of the NGTF on his behalf. Furthermore, on the anniversary of the Stonewall Riot, Chip attended the Great Tricycle Race in San Francisco and stated that he was there to "show his support for the gay peoples' political situation."[581] Chip Carter even rode a tricycle during the race "to designate the acceptance of that lifestyle."[582] One assumes that this was a way for Carter to show tacit, if discreet, support for gay rights.

Louie Crew in a personal interview highlighted the significance of the event and the excitement the gay community felt with his presence, "we were interested in the election brand and in the election process. Chip's presence was very important for us. We were all very excited and happy about it. We thought that at last someone was paying attention to us."[583] Costanza addressed a group of homosexuals in San Francisco about Chip's presence, stating "I'm here to tell you Chip Carter does not go to a Gay Rights celebration without the approval of the president and this campaign. He didn't just happen to show up or accidentally run into it, he wants your support."[584]

In a personal interview, Jeffrey Montgomery stressed that the homosexual community was under pressure. Carter's campaign, and the fact that his son attended gay rights rallies, made a positive difference. It was a way for people to learn about the gay rights community other than the extremely negative campaigning of the evangelical right: "It was a difficult period for us. A lot of people in the USA, like Anita Bryant, were talking about us in

[580] Letter from Robert Rygor of Gays for Carter to Carters campaign, n.d. (Gay Rights: Correspondence) 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[581] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[582] Midge Costanza interview to Ashley Boyd. 2010. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[583] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[584] Midge Costanza interviews to Dudley Clendinen, 1994-1995. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

demonic ways, and a lot of them were seeing us as abnormal and even dangerous. Having the son of the Presidential candidate attending our meetings and talking to us probably made a lot of these people reconsider their opinion about us. It certainly though created a positive visibility of our community."[585]

Carter's strong statement of opposition to discrimination against homosexuals was quoted repeatedly in communications from gay rights activists as, for example, in a letter written by Robert Osborn to Thomas Hastings, the New York Chief of Police, on August 24, 1976, referring to a meeting that had been held with Hastings and the need for police officers to receive training and instruction on how to deal with the gay community and, in particular, the need for the police not to harass homosexuals and transvestites. Osborn's letter quotes the American Civil Liberties Union's statement on the right of homosexuals not to be harassed, using wording almost identical to Carter's.[586] As well as pressing Carter to make a commitment to gay rights prior to the election, the NGTF pressed his running partner, Mondale. Mondale parroted Carter's line that, while he was opposed to "irrational" discrimination against homosexuals, he felt that there could be security issues around homosexuals in sensitive positions, and that it was necessary to maintain discriminatory laws in certain areas.[587]

Although they had reservations about how much he would do for them, many homosexual voters realised, having closely observed the appointments of Costanza and O'Leary, that Carter was the candidate most likely to help their cause, despite his often-discussed religious faith, and that he had taken a very significant step in appointing supporters of gay activism, as well as openly gay individuals, to his campaign. Professor

[585] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016.
[586] Letter from Robert Osborn to Thomas Hastings, 24 August 1976. Gay Rights Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 0/A. JCPL.
[587] Press release from Gay Review, no date available but presumed October 1976 because of text. (Gay Rights Publications) 3/75-1/78, (O/A 5771) 03/1975-01/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

Charlotte Bunch remembered in a personal interview: "I think in the beginning most of us were suspicious of Carter because he came from a Southern Christian background… but once he was chosen [as Presidential candidate] there were people like Midge Costanza, who had worked for him, and Jean O'Leary, who was part of the NGTF, who really convinced us that he was committed to human rights and that there was some way to work with him. There was no question, we would vote for him. But I think there was some question about how much he would really do at that point… there was a sense that he was the best of a bad lot and… some hope that there were some people in his campaign who were open to gay rights and there was certainly a sense that, that it was our turn, it was our time to get on the agenda."[588] Donald Hallman said in a personal interview about the importance of Carter's approach to the gay community during his 1976 campaign that: "Carter demonstrated that he recognized our existence and was not afraid to seek our vote. That was a brave thing to do at the time. It does not sound very important today when things are so different, but back then it was major …"[589]

The Role of the Evangelicals

In the 1970s, evangelical discourse and the evangelical vocabulary were then considered quite strange and exotic in a political context: "while evangelicals in the mid-1970s had begun to focus on a set of key issues, they had not yet linked those issues to the success of a particular political party. When Baptist school teacher Jimmy Carter campaigned for the presidency in 1976, a *Newsweek* cover story entitled "Born Again!" indicated that the increasingly important evangelical vote was still up for grabs,[590] although generally evangelicals tended to vote for right-wing Republicans.[591]

[588] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.
[589] Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.
[590] Sutton, 2013: 19.
[591] Sweeney, 2005: 199.

The Georgia governor was challenging incumbent Gerald Ford, also an evangelical Christian. When reporters on the campaign trail asked Carter about religion, he responded using typical evangelical language, explaining that he had a "personal relationship" with Jesus Christ. To the press, this sounded bizarre. *The New York Times* recalled that "many reporters reacted to Jimmy Carter's unabashed espousal of 'born again' Christianity with about as much befuddlement as if Mr. Carter had said he had ridden in a flying saucer."[592]

Carter often referenced his and his family's strong evangelical faith at a time when the membership of the evangelical churches was growing sharply at the expense of more liberal mainstream religions. This gave him an advantage among the generally intensely nationalist evangelicals.[593] The idea that the state should be prepared to intervene in matters of morality was gaining credence. The growing power of the evangelicals at this time, "forged a symbolic link between their own identity and that of the larger society, giving them a sense of political entitlement which made it more conceivable to speak out on moral issues," and they, "perceived themselves as having a special message to bring to the American people." They expressed a sense of responsibility to bring this message into the public forum, and presented themselves as "custodians of the values of our civilisation," (it is worth noting that the evangelical right was overwhelmingly white)[594] who had a responsibility to participate in public policy "whenever political and spiritual concerns overlap."[595]

At the 1976 Southern Baptist Convention in Norfolk, Virginia, Bailey Smith, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Del City, Oklahoma, endorsed Carter's candidacy, stating that the US needed "a born-again man in the White House. And his initials are the same as our Lord's!"[596] Realising that his faith might help his campaign, Carter started to refer to it more

[592] Sutton, 2013: 19.
[593] Marshall and Manuel, 1986: 368; Steding, 2014: 18-9.
[594] Alumkal, 2004: 196.
[595] Wuthnow, 1983, 177-8.
[596] MacPherson (*The Washington Post*), 27 September 1976: A1, 'Evangelicals Seen Cooling on Carter.'

often, although he made a particular effort to assure everyone, especially within his own party, that his faith was something personal and would not influence the way he made decisions.[597] In comparison to Ford, Carter appeared warm, friendly, approachable, and comfortable with religion. According to Kenneth J. Kollins, Professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, "The language of born-again Christianity flowed from his [Carter's] southern Baptist lips… and quickly became part of the national vocabulary."[598]

Carter's overt faith and public prayer helped to stall the flow of evangelicals towards the Republican Party.[599] Ford managed to assemble a group of evangelical leaders who were prepared to publicly lend their support to him and posit *him* as the candidate who was the closest to God.[600] Ford, an Episcopalian, even described himself as "born-again."[601] He also dragged his son, a divinity student, into the campaign.[602]

Many evangelicals were very excited about the prospect of Carter because, "they were proud of the new respectability that Carter's candidacy gave born-again Christianity."[603] Carter's easy relationship with his faith indicated to them that they had collectively been accepted and had a right to make their voices heard in the mainstream political arena. On October 25, 1976, the influential *Time* magazine proclaimed 1976 "The Year of the Evangelical."[604] The same year, 34% of all Americans claimed to have had a "born again"[605]

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[597] Memo of Stuart Eizenstat to Carter, 3 May 1976. Carter Pre-Presidential 1976 Campaign Files, Folder: Religion, 2/75–6/76, Box 27. JCPL.
[598] Collins, 2012: 96.
[599] Collins, 2012: 96; Oldfield, 1996: 108.
[600] Ringle (*The Washington Post*), 1 October 1976: A4. "Evangelical Broadcasters State Their Belief in Ford."
[601] Williams, 2008: 379.
[602] Balmer, 2008: 81.
[603] 2010: 125.
[604] Boyer, 2013: 17.
[605] Amusingly, an October 15th op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* had, tongue in cheek, posited that 1976 was "The Year of the Gay," and pointed to what the author saw as the extraordinary number of gay characters now being portrayed on television (von Hoffman, 15 October 1976) He was presumably referring to the rules and regulations issued by the Federal Register which referred to the duty of broadcasters to entertain the concerns of minorities (Federal Registry, Vol. 41, No. 4, Wednesday, 7 January 1976) which for the first time was being considered to include homosexuals who were being increasingly vocal about their need to be portrayed in a reasonable way in the media.

experience.[606] Ronald Reagan, then governor of California, also said that he had had a sort of born-again experience during his governorship.[607] Evangelicals' excitement at this time has been compared to the "coming out" experience of long-closeted homosexuals; finally, they felt that they were free to be open about who they really were.[608]

Powerful evangelicals were quick to offer support. One evangelical publisher "issued a book titled *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter*[609] and an evangelical organisation, Citizens for Carter, paid to place an advertisement in *Christianity Today* highlighting the spiritual experiences about which Carter had been so open."[610] The advertisement read, in part: "… in this post-Watergate era, people throughout the country are disillusioned with the moral corruption and incompetent leadership they see in the political arena. Citizens for Carter believes that a return to decency and integrity in government can begin this election year. As an evangelical you can play an important part in this restoration of confidence… America's problems are the result of a spiritual crisis at its heart… Citizens for Carter supports Jimmy Carter because he stands for a return to open government, competence, honesty and an abiding sense of the importance of morality in our national life."[611]

Carter also actively courted interest from conservatives such as the evangelical preachers Billy Graham (who would go on to give Carter advice on the Middle East)[612] and Pat Robertson.[613] In an interview on the Christian Broadcast Network in Virginia Beach, Robertson asked Carter if he intended to appoint any evangelicals to office and whether he

[606] Collins, 2012: 1976.
[607] Diamond, 1989: 55.
[608] Wald and Calhoun, 2007: 213.
[609] Norton, H. (1976) *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter.* Logos.
[610] Williams, 2010: 125.
[611] Martin, 1996: 153.
[612] Evans and Novak (*The Washington Post*), 8 December 1977: A19. "Growing Links between Carter and Billy Graham."
[613] Flippen, 2011: 95-6.

would listen to suggestions from Robertson.[614] When he said "Yeah"[615] to both questions, Robertson pledged his support, provided there were evangelicals in the administration.[616]

An important part in the mobilization of evangelical support for Carter should also be attributed to his sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, who was an evangelical preacher with a large number of followers across the South. Peter Bourne told the author that "her role in getting her congregations behind Carter, especially in places like Oklahoma was decisive in the primaries and to a lesser extent in the general election. There was also a strong element of regional chauvinism with Carter being the first potential president from the Deep South since Reconstruction."[617]

Many evangelicals were anxious about Carter's views on gay rights, as well as steps he might take to compromise the "traditional American family" (such as favouring feminists and gays and liberalising the law around abortion). Carter still hoped to win the vote of the more liberal activists, including gay rights activists, so while he needed support from conservative evangelicals, he could not appear to have too close an alliance with them. Bourne told the author that "in the campaign for president Carter wanted to avoid offending fundamentalist Christians and Catholics, so he had to modify his position without antagonizing the leaders of the women's movement. This came to a head in the Iowa caucuses. He had to walk a very narrow line. He and Rosalynn were already out spoken advocates of the Equal Rights Amendment which gave them some cover with women activists."[618]

[614] Letter from Robert Maddox to Pat Robertson, 23 October 1980. Correspondence File 10/20/80-10/31/80 folder, Box 102, Office of Public Liaison Robert Maddox. JCPL.
[615] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[616] Letter from Pat Robertson to Jimmy Carter, 12 January 1976, Folder: Correspondence File 10/20/80-10/31/80, Box 102, Office of Public Liaison Robert Maddox. JCPL.
[617] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.
[618] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.

During his campaign, Carter received the support of most religious voters, despite the fact that no "Christians for Carter" groups had been created.[619] However, Carter had shocked some conservative evangelicals by giving an interview to *Playboy*, stating that, "His Christian faith required him to maintain a non-judgemental attitude towards hedonists and sexual libertines," he had lusted after women other than his wife and he said, "Christ says, don't consider yourself better than someone else because one guy screws a whole bunch of women while the other guy is loyal to his wife… for us to hate one another, for us to have sexual intercourse outside marriage, to engage in homosexual activities, for us to lie, for us to steal… all these are sins. But Jesus teaches us not to judge other people. We don't assume the role of Judge…"[620]

In response to the interview, Carter was publicly criticised by many powerful evangelicals, including the increasingly influential televangelist Rev. Jerry Falwell, head of the 17,000-member Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va. Falwell was the presenter of the hugely popular nationally televised "Old-Time Gospel Hour," with an audience estimated by his aides at eighteen million a week. His broadcasts went out from 379 television and 400 radio stations in the USA and 69 TV stations abroad and his weekly pleas for contributions brought in $56 million. He also taped a half-hour of Bible study for daily broadcasts on 300 radio stations.[621] He was startled when Jody Powell, Carter's special assistant, telephoned his office and told him to "back off."[622] Republicans were delighted with Carter's mistake, "the kind of serious blunder for which the Ford strategists had hoped."[623] Carter apologised, saying, "If I should ever decide in future to discuss my deep

[619] Letter from Phil Strickland to Jimmy Carter, 12 March 1976. Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[620] *Playboy.* November 1976. Jimmy Carter Interview.
[621] Clendinen (*The New York Times*), 20 August 1980: 22, "Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote."; Sullivan (*The New York Times*), 11 November 1980: 2, Falwell Warns Jersey Liberals at Capitol Rally."; Turner (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1979, "Group of Evangelical Protestants Takes Over the GOP in Alaska."
[622] Collins, 2012: 97.
[623] Bitzer and Rueter, 1980: 25.

Christian beliefs and condemnation and sinfulness I'll use another forum besides *Playboy*."[624] He pointed out that outgoing President Ford's own secretary of the treasury, Mr Buckley, had given an interview to *Playboy* himself.[625]

Carter's interview, comments and the language he used seriously damaged his standing among the evangelical right, who were left "disillusioned and confused." Reverend Lindsell said, "Our Lord Jesus Christ would never use the medium of *Playboy* to make a statement about his life and conduct. Jesus Christ would never use scatological language; words you have never heard from this pulpit."[626] "Screw is just not a good Baptist word," said pastor Baily Smith who had previously urged evangelicals to vote for Carter.[627] Dr. Jerry Vines, another prominent pastor, expressed his doubts about Carter, "A lot of us are not convinced that Mr. Carter is truly in the evangelical Christian camp, and this tends to indicate to us that he isn't."[628] Several other pastors, including Carter's own pastor at the Southern Baptist Church in Plains, were unhappy with the interview and Carter's language.[629]

Ford benefited from the *Playboy* debacle, and in a commercial featuring the right wing Southern Baptist pastor, Criswell, the pastor was quoted as endorsing Ford: "On Thursday, of a week ago, along with other men of faith, I was invited to visit the President in the White House. And in our conversation with him, we asked him, 'Mr. President, if *Playboy* magazine were to ask you for an interview, what would you do?' And the President replied, 'I was asked by *Playboy* magazine for an interview, and I replied with an emphatic, "No."' And I like that!"[630]

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[624] Plotkin, 1977: 68.
[625] Bitzer and Rueter, 1980: 328.
[626] MacPherson (*The Washington Post*), 27 September 1976: A3, 'Remarks in Playboy Draw Pulpit Attack.'
[627] MacPherson (*The Washington Post*), 27 September 1976: A1, 'Evangelicals Seen Cooling on Carter.'
[628] Satchell (*Washington Star*), 21 September 1976, "Barnyard Language' Denounced."
[629] Kaiser (*The Washington Post*), 21 September 1976, "Remarks on Sexuality Draw Mixed Response."
[630] "Criswell," Ford campaign commercial, 1976. Available from: http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1976.

Ultimately, the *Playboy* article cost Carter many evangelical votes and forced him into an awkward apology.[631] Falwell discussed the interview in a sermon entitled "Seven Things Capturing America." The remarks were picked up by the *Washington Post* and CBS news. Carter's team immediately contacted networks that aired televangelists' material and threatened them with legal action should they air programmes made by Falwell and critical of Carter. In response, a group of fundamentalist preachers, including Falwell, called a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, where Falwell stated that, "I resent anybody in Washington, or anybody trying to go to Washington, silencing and muzzling a preacher of the Gospel from preaching his moral convictions." Right wing evangelical leaders started to move decisively away from Carter, and Falwell began to take a decidedly more political stance.[632]

A group of conservative leaders including Howard Phillips, Paul Weyrich, and Richard Viguerie approached Falwell with the suggestion that he create an organisation that would mobilise fundamentalists and evangelicals as voters. For the time being, Falwell was not interested.[633] At the same time, the *Playboy* article was significant in terms of signalling Carter's view of homosexuality as on a par with activities such as heterosexual sex before marriage – sinful in the eyes of God, in his view, but not a matter for government, and not something that should automatically prevent homosexuals from a full and active participation in American society. In this way, Carter was engaging in one of many actions that helped to frame homosexuality as an ordinary aspect of life. In a personal interview, Louie Crew said: "We all knew that Carter didn't really approve of homosexuality, but at least he recognised that we had equal rights like everyone else. For us, this was the most important thing. In those

[631] Flippen, 2011: 100.
[632] Harding, 2000: 128.
[633] Hariston (*The Independent*), 7 May 1987, "Is PTL's Savior Facing His Own Judgement Day?"

days, anti-gay rhetoric and feelings were so widespread, that a public figure who recognised us as equal members of society was an ally by definition."[634]

Presaging the problems that would arise when Carter's progressive approach to human rights clashed with his identity as a Southern Baptist, during his campaign the Southern Baptist Convention asserted that homosexuality was "contrary to Biblical truth" and insisted that active homosexuals should not be ordained or hired. Increasingly, hard line right wing evangelicals identified homosexuality, along with abortion (still considered broadly a "Catholic" matter), as an issue on which they would find little to agree with Carter. Horrified by Carter's promise to sign Abzug's gay rights bill (discussed in the previous chapter),[635] conservative columnist William Willoughby wrote that, "The question over homosexuality for most evangelicals, if grass-roots samplings are any indication, is as politically damaging to Carter in their eyes as the Democratic stand on abortion is to the Catholic voters."[636] Anti-gay voters who might otherwise have been interested in Carter switched to Ford, while members of both gay rights and the evangelical right interest groups became increasingly focused on their approach to the forthcoming election. One former campaign worker recalled, eighteen years later, that there was a massive disconnect between the prudishness of the evangelical right and the permissiveness of so many young people in that era, including the many young workers on Carter's campaign.[637]

Subsequently, evangelical approval of Carter waned as his campaign progressed. The fact that he failed to take a conservative line on abortion, courted the gay vote, his support for liberal theologians, and his disastrous *Playboy* interview cost him a large number of voters.[638] Nonetheless, despite his relatively liberal views on issues such as gay rights, he still managed

[634] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[635] Clendinen and Nagourney, 1999: 272-3.
[636] Willoughby (*National Currier*), 17 September 1976: 2. "Gay Issue to Plague Carter's Campaign?" NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[637] Anderson, 1994: 100.
[638] MacPherson (*The Washington Post*), 27 September 1976: A3. "Remarks in Playboy Draw Pulpit Attack."

to secure considerable evangelical support on the day of the election. Tony Campolo, Pastor and one of the leaders of the Evangelical Left, confirmed in a personal interview that many evangelicals voted for Carter on election day, largely because "he had been the one who had introduced the idea of being 'born again' to American politics."[639]

Dr. Morris Sheats, Senior Pastor and founder of the Trinity Church, told the author that "many of the people who voted for Carter felt that he would help to restore their faith in the political system."[640] Peter Bourne also told the author that most evangelicals still voted for Carter because "they saw him as one of them and at that stage were willing to overlook some of his more liberal views.[641] D. Michael Lindsay, President of Gordon College and author of *Faith in the Halls of Power,* stated in a personal interview that "some of the evangelical voting bloc still supported President Carter personally and felt that he represented their values, even as the leadership segment of American evangelicalism did not."[642]

One outcome of the campaign was that evangelicals had become increasingly adept at mobilising their grass roots through a range of media. Noteworthy was their use of simple techniques such as the "phone tree", which could be used simply and effectively by, for example, mothers based in the home, to contact huge numbers of potential voters.[643] All of these would be used in their activism against gay rights.

Carter Wins

Carter won the election with 50.1% of the vote against Ford's 48.0%. Many attributed his victory to his deep religious faith, despite evangelical reservations about him, the *Playboy* interview,[644] his framing of homosexuals as equal members of American society, and the fact

[639] Dr. Tony Campolo in a personal interview, 30 April 2014.
[640] Dr. Morris Sheats in a personal interview, 6 April 2014.
[641] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.
[642] D. Michael Lindsay in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.
[643] Reichley, 1985: 318.
[644] Djupe and Olson, 2003: 366; Self, 2007: 331.

that he was technically the least qualified candidate.[645] Carter had outpolled Ford among white Baptists by 56 per cent to 43 per cent. Political scientist John Green calculated that Carter had obtained 48% of the evangelical vote, with a slight majority going to his opponent; more than usually voted for a Democrat candidate[646] (very different to the previous election, when Nixon had obtained 80% of the evangelical vote).[647]

Evangelicals gave Carter his margin of victory not only in the South (where he also was helped by regional pride)[648] but also in key northern states like Pennsylvania and Ohio with large rural populations that usually voted Republican. Carter owed his election largely to the evangelicals (though also, of course, to Blacks, Jews, and other minority groups that favoured him by wide margins).[649] For example Carter won more than 90% of the black vote, which made the difference in several northern industrial states.[650] The shift in the voting patterns of white Protestants, a group that incorporated the evangelical right, was noteworthy; a 14 point gain on the numbers who had voted for Democrat McGovern in the 1972 elections.[651] Michael Dukakis told the author that "the fact that Jimmy Carter was a southerner played a hugely important role. A lot of us thought that his roots were a big plus for him, and I don't think there is any question that they played a big role in his victory even though he only won barely."[652]

Ultimately, Carter prevailed by persuading very diverse demographics to vote for him, obtaining votes in the South and industrial areas of the Northeast, among trade union members, ethnic minorities, and liberals.[653] Black voters in the South were also a decisive

[645] Jorstad, 1981: 85.
[646] Menendez, 1996: 128; Martin, 1996: 255.
[647] Turner, 2008: 255.
[648] Spalding, 1977: 18.
[649] Reichley, 1987: 78.
[650] Denton (*The Washington Post*), 16 August 1980: 11, "The Democrats in New York: Carter Begins his Campaign by Appealing to Black Voters."
[651] Plotkin, 1977: 53.
[652] Professor Michael Dukakis in a personal interview, 27 April 2014.
[653] Stanley, 2010: 29.

element,[654] having observed that Carter was the only candidate who looked comfortable worshipping in a Black church, while many Black evangelicals found that Carter's Baptist faith resonated with theirs.[655] The Democratic Party as a whole had been condemned by the highest-ranking Catholic prelate in America and many individual Catholics did not vote for him,[656] although he did obtain 57% of the Catholic vote.[657] Gay voters generally voted for Carter, along with other liberals. In general, large numbers of registered Democrats had voted for Carter, whereas many had voted for the Republican candidate in the previous election.[658]

Many Conservative Christians welcomed Carter's election, even though most of them felt that he was more liberal than they were,[659] and there was a general understanding of how much he owed to their vote. America's Catholics remained anxious about Carter because of his stance on abortion.[660] When Carter took his oath as the new President, he used two Bibles; one that had been used by Washington, and one that had been a gift from his mother. They were open at a verse stressing the importance of humility, and Carter referenced America as a country that defined itself both in terms of spirituality and human liberty.[661]

While Carter certainly did not directly reference homosexuality in any way, it was already clear from his campaign behaviour and from what he publicly said that he considered gays as having equal rights to liberty. In his deeply religious inaugural speech, Carter introduced the concept of human rights as a pathway to redemption and proposed that an adherence to policies that promoted human rights offered an opportunity for America to renew itself; essentially to be "born again" as he had been, through his faith.[662]

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[654] Plotkin, 1977: 62.
[655] Ribuffo, 1992: 218-20.
[656] Hyer (*The Washington Post*), 25 June 1976: A8. "Democrats Hit on Abortion."
[657] Moore, 2010: 198.
[658] Miller, 1978: 130.
[659] Miller, 1978: 141.
[660] Evans and Novak (*The Washington Post*), 8 December 1976: A29. "Carter's Debut: Assorted Mixups."
[661] Walz, 2001: 198.
[662] Steding, 2014: 48.

After the election, both gay and evangelical right voters were hopeful about what Carter would do for them. Falwell said, "… he will have my respect and support. I will pray for him daily. But I will oppose him when he violates moral codes which in my opinion are in opposition to Scripture."[663] Evangelical activist Bill Bright wrote to Carter shortly after his election expressing his delight and stating, "I believe that God has raised you up for this dramatic moment in history to help give spiritual leadership in this world in crisis."[664]

Other evangelicals who were close to Carter and had helped him during his campaign, such as Phil Strickland, who was also Carter's religious expert during the campaign, and Reverend Robert Maddox, also intimated to Carter that they expected him to retain contact with the evangelical voters who had entrusted him with so much.[665] Gay rights groups, similarly, were hopeful that Carter would make significant legal changes to improve their situation. Louie Crew told the author that "Carter seemed to be sincere when he talked about human rights, so we were hopeful that he would be able to set aside his personal religious views, and make a positive difference for us."[666]

According to Costanza, Carter was able to appeal at the time to both evangelicals and homosexuals "because the issue of Gay Rights never rose to the level of acknowledgment as it does today in campaigns. It didn't rise to the level of priority or importance as it does today [2010]. And how is that measured? By the number of people who send letters and who become the proponents or opponents of a particular way of thinking. And at the time, they did not have enough people marching in the streets, that made them important to an elected official. I mean, go figure."[667]

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[663] Wuthnow, 1983: 180.
[664] Turner, 2008: 176.
[665] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 8 December 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews, JCPL; Letter from Phil Strickland to Landon Butler, 16 February 1977, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[666] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[667] Midge Costanza interview to Ashley Boyd. 2010. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

Carter jeopardised his election and the support of his closest and biggest allies, the evangelicals, by courting the gay voters. As Costanza said, at the time, the gay voters formed a very small part of the electoral pool, while the evangelicals and the conservative Christians represented the biggest. Therefore, Carter had much more to lose by courting the gay voters at the expense of the evangelicals. Carter must have been either very ill advised for courting the gay vote, especially in such an open and public way (advertising in gay publications, hiring O'Leary and Costanza to his team, sending his son Chip to campaing for him in public gay celebrations in San Francisco etc.), or he really had an interest in advancing gay rights as parts of his human rights policies.

It may well be argued that Carter sailed close to the wind by doing all the above as they could have very easily cost him the election by losing the support of the conservative Christians and the evangelicals. It seems that Carter, apart from the obvious fact that he wanted their vote, really had concerns about the issue and was willing to help and advance gay rights. In support of this argument, as it will be demonstrated in the forthcoming chapters, immediately after moving into White House, Carter began taking steps to improve the lives of homosexual Americans and proved that his promises were not just words.

Carter's Contribution to Gay Rights During the Election Campaign

The 1976 elections represented a pivotal moment for the gay rights movement. During his campaign, Carter recognised and engaged with the gay rights community as a legitimate social movement, and as a legitimate interest group (as the NGTF). Carter's asking gay voters for their support, his advertising in gay publications, his public support for gay rights, and the presence of prominent gay rights activists and open lesbians in his campaign team, all clearly played important roles in legitimising both the gay rights movement and homosexuality itself in the eyes of many Americans. These engagements with the cause, more than any of the

actual changes made to legislation at this time (all of which will be discussed) were a watershed moment for the movement as it shifted from a niche position, on the fringes of society, to centre stage. While many still opposed gay rights, at least the topic had become part of the national conversation.

Donald Hallman said in a personal interview about Carter's openness to the gay community in the 1976 elections, "suddenly, we realised our voice could be heard and we could gain access to the political system of our own country. For us, this was massive."[668] Eddie Sandifer told the author that Carter: "… definitely offered legitimacy to our movement. In the 1950s and maybe even in the 1960s it would have been unheard for a President nominee to speak publicly like this about homosexuals or to seek our vote. Carter was not afraid to talk publicly about homosexuals and he brought the subject to the American media."[669] Also in a personal interview, Jeffrey Montgomery stated that "the 1976 elections were very important for our movement and for all homosexuals in the USA and this was because of Carter's approach towards us. I was very young at the time and not much involved with the movement, but I think during the [1976] elections Americans realized that we are people and we have rights like any one of them. I remember President Carter talking positively about us in the media and this was a very positive step for us, being recognized as equal members of society."[670]

CONCLUSION

Carter's actions in the 1976 elections undoubtedly granted the gay rights movement legitimacy in the eyes of the American public – an important symbolic good in itself, and a major resource for activists. In the context of the fierce battle the gay rights movement fought

[668] Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.
[669] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.
[670] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016.

with the evangelical right, this legitimacy signalled to activists and their supporters that it was time to take action. America as a whole underwent an (often painful) cultural shift, in which matters of homosexuality and gay rights ceased to be the sole affair of a fringe element in society, and became an integral element of liberal politics. The term "cultural framing" is used to describe the ways in which individuals and societies make sense of their world. Prior to the emergence of the modern gay rights movement, which in the US came of age during the Carter presidency, the general view was that gay rights were not a matter for most people to consider, and that homosexuality was shameful (or, at best, tragic).

Carter also endeavoured to reach out to the evangelicals, a more obvious constituency for him than the gay rights movement. Despite his relatively liberal position on various social issues, many evangelicals saw him as "one of them" and supported him for this reason, even though some prominent evangelicals publicly criticised his positions and did not vote for him. Still, evangelical support was significant in his win.

The 1976 election was important for Carter, and also for both the gay rights movement and the evangelical right. For each, this was the first time that they made their appearance as major social movements that played an important role in the elections. It was the first time that both the gay rights and the evangelical right movements mobilised as coherent political forces to support a candidate most likely to represent their interests in office. The mutual exclusivity of these interests, and Carter's attempts to represent both, would be one of the major tensions that he would face as President. Throughout Carter's term, the two movements grew progressively stronger. They both continued to do so after his term in office, and they both continue to play a major role in American politics even today. For the gay rights movement in particular, this was the first time it mobilised behind a presidential nominee. In this context, the gay rights movement was inspired by the structural inequality built into America in terms of the distribution of resources. Homosexuals had been

badly treated in America for years, and as they coalesced as a political force, they had had enough. Increasingly, as per the vision propounded by Resource Mobilisation theorists, they were simply responding rationally and in a political way to the situation in which they found themselves, in which few resources (both material and symbolic) were allocated to them. Their goal was, simply, the removal of the formal structures of inequality that impacted negatively on them in a range of ways.

Although the evangelical movement in the 1976 elections was polarised for its support of its favourite candidate, as we will see, it soon underwent a transformation, emerging as a countermovement. This was largely in response to the advances won by gay rights activists, and the increasing visibility and influence of the gay rights movement in American politics. The 1976 Presidential election was the place where these two completely opposed movements started their political adventure and a mutual struggle that remains very lively today. For the first and last time, a Presidential candidate could count on considerable (if not complete) support from two opposing social movements. After the election, writers and commentators were quick to attempt to interpret what everyone agreed was an important point in history.[671]

The gay rights movement's newfound legitimacy was a tangible resource that gave them greater clout in the political arena, from the local level all the way to the White House. While a whole generation would pass before the gay rights movement was considered "acceptable" by a wide section of American society, this was an important first step. In terms of its contribution to a major cultural shift in American society, it communicated to the wider American public that there was nothing wrong with being homosexual, or with discussing homosexuality and the broader issue of gay rights. Topics that had once been seen as shameful or embarrassing were now integrated into mainstream public discourse.

[671] Anderson, 1994; Miller, 1978; Pomper et al, 1981; Spalding, 1977.

All in all, Carter legitimised the gay rights movement and gave a clear message to the public that he was ready to listen to and to work with it. It was perfectly evident that it was Carter's view that gays were as much a part of American society as anyone else, and that they had every right to be listened to. While gay rights activists had been campaigning for their rights for years, this was the first time that a Presidential candidate had broached the issue with such openness, and the first time that gay rights activists could think with justification that the highest office in the United States was ready to do business with them.

CHAPTER FOUR

GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IN THE WHITE HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines two main issues of Carter's efforts with regards to gay rights. First, it examines an aspect of Carter's contribution to gay rights that has not been examined before. This is the appointment of several openly homosexual individuals to his administration and to public positions. Secondly, this chapter also examines the breakthrough meeting in the White House with gay rights activists, the first encounter of its kind in American history. The meeting is the best-known fact concerning Carter and gay rights and it has been discussed by scholars and academics. However, although the meeting itself and its background have been examined, what is lacking is a scholarly and detailed account of how the meeting affected the gay rights movement and its impact in changing public and governmental discourse regarding gay rights in the USA. This chapter offers a detailed and thorough examination of these unexplored aspects of the meeting, based on archival records and interviews with several prominent gay rights workers who were active at the time. Therefore, it adds a substantial and important amount of new and different information to what is already known.

HOMOSEXUALS IN CARTER'S ADMINISTRATION

A bold and important contribution by Carter to gay rights was his appointment of several openly homosexual persons to his administration and to Federal agencies, the first time any American president had taken such a step.[672] This was in line with "his policy of appointing qualified individuals without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, national

[672] Eric Marcus in a personal interview, 18 February 2015; Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 12 March 2014; Green (*The Blade*), 20 December 1979: A3, "White House Cool to Plea on Executive Order."

origin or sexual orientation," to which he remained committed until the end of his presidency,[673] although it had a negative effect on his relationship with conservative and evangelical Christians. The first and most important of such appointees was Jean O'Leary, a co-director of the NGTF and leading gay rights activist. Carter appointed her to three different positions: to his 51.3% Committee during his presidential campaign in 1976, to his election team in 1976, and most importantly as a member of the President's National Women's Advisory Committee in 1977. She was the first openly homosexual person ever to be appointed to a public position by a president of the United States.[674]

On Costanza's recommendation, Carter also appointed to the Women's Advisory Committee, another acknowledged lesbian, Ruth Abram, co-executive director of the Women's Action Alliance and a board member of NGTF. As we will see in Chapter Six, O'Leary and Abram would be instrumental in the inclusion and acceptance of a sexual preference plank at the Women's Conference in Houston in 1977.[675]

Another important appointment was that of Jill Schropp in July 1979 to the newly reorganized President's National Advisory Committee on Women. Schropp, a private real estate investor, was campaign manager of Citizens to Retain Fair Employment, a group which successfully fought off repeal of Seattle's gay rights law in 1978.[676] The NGTF applauded her appointment and said, "We consider it a most positive sign that President Carter has again appointed a member of America's lesbian community to his Advisory Committee on Women, and we are particularly pleased that Jill Schropp was his chosen appointee."[677]

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[673] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[674] Midge Costanza interview to Ashley Boyd. 2010. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[675] News from NGTF, 15 April 1977, "Sexual Preference Added to List of International Women's Year Issues." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 32. CU.
[676] *Lesbian Tide*, July/August 1979: 24, "Carter Appoints Lesbian."
[677] News from NGTF. 10 May 1979, "NGTF Applauds Appointment of Jill Schropp to Women's Advisory Committee." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 120, CU.

In addition, shortly before the presidential elections of 1980, and though already under serious pressure from right-wing evangelicals over his moves for gay rights, Carter appointed Virginia Apuzzo, a lesbian community activist, to his party's platform committee for the Democratic Convention of 1980. She would go on to co-author the first gay rights plank at a convention of either of the two major U.S. parties.[678]

According to gay activists, as well as people close to Carter who spoke to this study, Carter's administration was a comfortable and welcoming workplace for gay employees. Peter Bourne told the author that "there were several gay and bisexual staff members at a high level in the White House, and Carter was both aware and accepting. He had four children in their teenage years or twenties who were quite aligned with the gay rights movement and I think Carter himself shared their views. Compared to his two predecessors and his two followers, he was much more open personally than they were."[679] Eric Marcus, author and gay rights activist, told the author that during Carter's presidency he had been in a relationship with a (male) aide. "I don't know if Carter knew he was gay," Marcus said, "But my boyfriend found it a very comfortable place to work, and wasn't fearful of anyone finding out that he was gay."[680]

Nancy Higgins made a similar comment to the author about a friend: "I had met someone who was working at the White House. She did not have many dealings with him (Carter), but she spoke very highly of him. She thought he was a very sweet man. I don't know if he knew that she was lesbian, but all her colleagues knew and she was very open about it. She would take part in a demonstration outside the White House and then would just go back in, wearing the same clothes, not being bothered at all. She said there were several

[678] Humm and Santoro (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 25. "If we Gay Men and Lesbians Stand Up."
[679] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 12 March 2014.
[680] Eric Marcus in a personal interview, 18 February 2015.

gays and lesbians in the White House and most people were comfortable with it; Carter certainly was."[681]

In addition to men and women employees who were openly gay, Professor Doreen Mattingly told the author that there were also some closeted gay man and women in the Carter administration. She said these people "helped to keep things going (for gay rights) behind the scenes. I think there was probably a lot more at play behind the scenes that made the administration accomplish what it did."[682] The impact of all these appointments will be seen in the following chapters.

Margaret (Midge) Costanza – Gay Rights Activists' Ally in the White House

While Carter and his administration got settled into office, Phil Strickland (mentioned in Chapter Three), suggested that the new director of the White House's Office of Public Liaison (OPL) should be someone "religious enough to understand religious mind-sets and political enough to understand issues."[683] To the disappointment of Strickland and the evangelicals,[684] Carter instead chose to appoint Midge Costanza,[685] an ardent feminist and known by those close to her to be a lesbian, as director of OPL.[686]

[681] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 17 June 2016.
[682] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[683] Memorandum of Phil Strickland to Jimmy Carter, 3 December 1976, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[684] Letter from Phil Strickland to Landon Butler, 16 February 1977, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[685] Organizational changes in the Office of Public Liaison Memorandum from 31 March 1977, Public Liaison and Reorganization folder, Box 14, Midge Costanza files. JCPL.
[686] This was an appointment in line with Carter's efforts to hire much larger numbers of women than had been employed in previous presidencies, and his tendency to find them through political channels (Carroll, 1986: 706.) Before Carter, just three women had ever served as secretaries of government departments, but during his administration, four departments were led by women and, by early 1978, women filled more than 22% of Carter's presidential appointments (Fact sheet, n.d., Women's appointments folder, Box 18, Sarah Weddington files, JCPL; Cook, 1995: 2; Martin, 2009: 209.). Sarah Weddington, special assistant to the President, noted that Carter was firmly committed to including more women in important positions, and that he often identified areas that needed more women, even when others had not (Martin, 2009: 214), while Rosalynn frequently advised him on political matters (Cook, 1995: 31). Clearly, Carter was committed to giving women serious leadership roles, rather than mere token positions. Carter's choice of women senior staff members was even more striking, because these women were involved in presidential decision-making at the highest level. Although Costanza had to deal with complaints from women's organisations, Carter's gains in this area actually outlived his term in office (Martin, 2009: 209; 243).

Carter and Costanza had become close during his presidential campaign, when he had appointed her to work as his assistant for public liaison. She called him "Jimmy" and was given the office next to his; a decision of considerable symbolic importance. Costanza shared with Carter a deep commitment to human rights and to ideals of social justice. She was often quoted as saying: "When anybody's rights are threatened, no one's rights are secure."[687] As President, Carter told her that he wanted her "to be the window to the nation"[688] and he appeared to hope that she would mastermind changes in difficult areas, such as securing progress on gay rights, without upsetting evangelicals, while at the same time deflecting attention from his own role.[689]

As officer for Public Liaison, communicating with religious bodies was part of Costanza's remit, and religious leaders were not happy about this. Strickland, although he never came to work at the White House, did become involved in some aspects of liaising with religious bodies. It was an awkward arrangement that did not please anybody and seems to have resulted from the fact that Carter and his team felt that he was already in good standing with evangelicals, and that there was no need to devote a lot of special attention to them.[690]

Carter hoped that the OPL would show that the White House was open to everyone, and that his government would be both honest and responsive to the public. A White House directive explained that: "… the OPL in the past served as a political arm of the President working closely with the Republican National Committee and - in the case of the Nixon years - with the Committee to Re-elect the President. In keeping with the President's directives and Costanza's personal approach to the office, the work of the Office of Public Liaison should

[687] Mattingly and Boyd, 2013: 366.
[688] Midge Costanza quoted in NGLTF, 26 March 2007, "Leaders Recount Historic White House Meeting 30 Years Later." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[689] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[690] Letter from Phil Strickland to Midge Costanza and Chip Carter, 21 March 1977. Christian Life Commission folder, Box: 91. JCPL.

become... less partisan."[691] In other words, the OPL was not intended to push Carter's policies or agenda, but to serve as a way in which ordinary Americans, represented by interest groups and other bodies, could gain access to the White House and have their concerns heard and communicated to the relevant authorities.[692]

However, Costanza, with her long history of liberal activism and outreach, was viewed as an alienating choice by some groups, notably fundamentalists and evangelicals, because she seemed to support groups such as feminists and homosexuals, whom they deplored.[693] On the other hand, her appointment delighted gay rights activists. The NGTF hailed it as "very gratifying and reassuring to us."[694]

Louie Crew told the author that Costanza's appointment "was a strong indication of Carter's intention to attend to gay rights."[695] In a personal interview, Jeffrey Montgomery said that "not everyone, and probably not even all the gay rights people themselves, recognised immediately what a big deal Midge's appointment was. You've got to realise that this was someone who had a long history of feminism, someone who had often spoken out in favour of gay rights. And there she was, a friend of the President, on first name terms with him, with a big job in the White House. She gave us reason to hope that things were finally going to get better for us."[696]

[691] Organizational changes in the Office of Public Liaison memorandum, 31 March 1977. Midge Costanza files, Public Liaison and Reorganization folder, Box 14. JCPL.
[692] EOP Reorganization Study Fact Finding Questionnaire, n.d. Public Liaison and Reorganization folder, Box 14, Midge Costanza files. JCPL.
[693] Memorandum Phil Strickland to Midge Costanza and Chip Carter, 21 March 1977, Christian Life Commission folder, Box 91. JCPL.
[694] Bruce Voeller and Jean O'Leary to Midge Costanza, 1 February 1977, Margaret Costanza Files, Folder (Gay Rights; Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976-08/1978, Box 4. JCPL.
[695] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[696] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016.

GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Background

Early in his presidency, Carter met with guarded approval from gay rights groups who hoped that he would act on the supportive words he had spoken during the campaign, and that he would not forget their role in helping him to get elected. As soon as Carter was elected, the NGTF wrote to Governor Milton Sharp of Pennsylvania, who had made pioneering efforts to improve legislation with respect to homosexual rights, asking him to communicate directly with Carter "outlining the action you have taken via executive order, and the positive effects of that action, and suggesting to him that similar action might be taken by his administration with similar results on a national scale."[697] As publicity mounted around their cause and the increasingly polarised stand-off around issues of gay rights, the NGTF requested a meeting with members of the White House staff.[698]

Costanza and her assistant, Marilyn Haft, Associate Director of the Office of Public Liaison, who had served in the board of the Gay Rights National Lobby, began working towards organising such a meeting with the NGTF in the White House. On February 8, 1977, Costanza held informal and unofficial talks at the White House with Bruce Voller and Jean O'Leary, co-directors of the NGTF. They were asked by Costanza to make "a full, formal presentation of the needs of gays in the federal area to her and her staff on Saturday, March 26, at the White House." Subsequently, the NGTF characterised that encounter in a press release as "very successful and promising," while it described the forthcoming official meeting as "the biggest opportunity in our movement's history."[699] It would address issues of discrimination in areas including housing, the military, jails and employment.

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[697] Letter from the NGTF to Governor Sharp, 19 November 1976. Records of the 1976 Campaign Committee to Elect Jimmy Carter, Andy Shea's Subject Files as Director of the Speaker's Bureau, Governors, Container, 284. JCPL.
[698] Letter from the NGTF to Margaret Costanza, 11 February 1977, Margaret Costanza's Subject Files, (Gay Rights: Correspondence) 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[699] NGTF Press release. 9 February 1977. NGTF records, Box 2, Folder 60, CU.

Costanza and Haft and the NGTF immediately began making their respective preparations for the meeting, which was clearly going to attract huge attention from the media. For her efforts, Costanza was hailed by the NGTF as a "friend in the White House."[700] Haft[701] recalled in a personal interview that there was no pressure from gay rights activists to organise such a meeting so early in Carter's presidency, and that "the meeting was strictly my and Midge's idea - me because I had done all the litigation for gay rights and the ACLU [the American Civil Liberties Union] and Midge because she was gay."[702]

Lisa Keen, a *Blade* journalist at the time, told the author that "Costanza later said Carter may have felt some concern about her meeting with the group when he told her he was afraid her time was 'being spread too thin' and that she should 'concentrate in the areas of domestic human rights and women's issues.' He did not explicitly tell her to avoid LGBT issues, but she said there was 'all this controversy swirling' around her because of the meeting, so that's how she interpreted his remark."[703]

Naturally, evangelicals and other conservative Christians were not pleased. However, Costanza appears to have been unmoved by the pressure being brought to bear from that quarter. She wrote warmly to the NGTF shortly before the meeting, confirming the issues to be discussed and stating: "I… wish to explore more fully the role my office and I can play; specifically in facilitating meetings with those persons who will be most helping for you in the areas we have reviewed."[704]

Excitement was very high in the NGTF prior to the meeting and officials ensured there was a precise gender balance within its ten-person delegation to the White House – five

[700] *The Advocate*. 23 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49. CU.
[701] Marilyn Haft had written the American Civil Liberties Union's *The Rights of Gay People* and served on the board of the Gay Rights National Lobby.
[702] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[703] Lisa Keen in a personal interview, 4 March 2017.
[704] Letter from Costanza to Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller of the NGTF, 8 February 1977. NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 47, CU.

lesbians and five gay men.[705] They had a slot of more than an hour and a half, which would be filled with fourteen short presentations and a little time to field questions and debate. O'Leary and Voeller stressed to participants that they should focus on discrimination and be prepared to back up their evidence with facts and figures The NGTF had resolved to contribute to the meeting in a spirit of non-confrontation.[706]

Members of the NGTF attended the meetings dressed in formal business suits, implying that they were no different from other ordinary American citizens. They wanted to demonstrate that they were respectable business people and some with academic backgrounds who had every right to be listened to and treated with consideration. The approach taken by NGTF was described by Lucia Valeska, their executive director, as an action representing "a certain amount of moderation, compromise and mellowing of goals that automatically takes place when you are in that arena. You dress like them, think like them, you sound reasonable... You give them the impression that they can't possibly disagree with you."[707]

The meeting

The much-anticipated meeting took place as planned, on Saturday, March 26, 1977. Carter was at Camp David at the time and hence could not attend this meeting. Apart from Costanza and Haft, Cooki Lutkefedder, civil-rights specialist with the Office of Domestic Affairs of the Democratic National Committee, also attended as an observer.[708] Eventually, instead of ten, fourteen gay rights activists participated.[709]

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[705] News from the NGTF, n.d. "Gay Representatives Chosen for White House Meeting." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.
[706] Letter from the NGTF (Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller) to participants in the meeting with Margaret Costanza, 15 March 1977. (National Gay Task Force Correspondence) 9/76-2/78 (O/A 4499), 09/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
707 Lucia Valeska interview, n.d. NGTF records, Box 6, Folder 3. CU.
[708] News from the NGTF, 31 March 1977, "NGTF-Federal Agency Meetings Set Second White House Conference in September." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.
[709] They were as follows: Pokey Anderson; Charles Brydon, former military man and member of the NGTF Board of Directors; Charlotte Bunch, academic and member of the NGTF Board of Directors; Ray Hartman, former naval officer and the interim chair of the Gay Rights National Lobby; Franklin Kameny, former

The meeting lasted ninety minutes and opened with Costanza's welcoming words: "It is a pleasure to meet you. I'm sorry that it has taken so long for you to come into a house that belongs to you as much as it does to anyone in this country."[710] Following Costanza's welcome, representatives from the NGTF made a series of representations and demands. The main focus of the discussion was on government agencies that the NGTF felt had a discrimination policy. These were the Department of Defence, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Welfare, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Immigration and Naturalization, the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the US Commission on Civil Rights, the State Department and the US Civil Service Commission.[711]

The NGTF requested the White House's assistance for a series of meetings with these agencies.[712] Costanza and Haft agreed to organise such meetings and also arranged with the NGTF to meet again in September 1977 to discuss the progress from the meetings,[713] while both parties agreed to keep in touch and hold any additional emergency meeting.[714]

The activists also asked Carter to take immediate action on two areas:

- Order that immigration policy be administered fairly and equitably so that gay

astronomer and a pioneer in the area of gay rights, having been in the Mattachine Society of Washington and now on the Board of Directors of the NGTF. Kameny had frequently protested at the gates of the White House and had petitioned the three previous Presidents, always to no effect; William Kelley, successful lobbyist for change in anti-gay legislation in Illinois; Elaine Noble, member of the Massachusetts state legislature; Jean O'Leary, co-Executive Director of the NGTF; Reverend Troy Perry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Churches and on the Board of Directors of the NGTF; Betty Powell, African American instructor at Brooklyn College and Co-Chairperson of the NGTF; George Raya, investigator at the Child Support Bureau, gay rights and Chicano activist; Myra Riddell, psychotherapist and former consultant of the Gay Community Services Centre; Charlotte Spitzer, lecturer at the University of California and founder of Parents and Friends of Gays; and Bruce Voeller, biologist, founder and Co-Executive director of the NGFT (*NewsWest*, 14-28 April 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU; Mendenhall (*Bay Area Reporter*), 31 March 1977. "White House Opens Doors – Gays Make Demands." NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.

[710] *NewsWest*, 14-28 April 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.

[711] Memorandum from Costanza to Carter, 8 April 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

[712] Memorandum from Marilyn Haft to Margaret Costanza, 11 April 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

[713] News from the NGTF, 31 March 1977, "NGTF-Federal Agency Meetings Set Second White House Conference in September." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.

[714] White House Memorandum, 11 April 1977. Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

women and men who are unknown or of moderate means are admitted to this country under the same flexible policy that is currently applied to rich or famous gay visitors.

- Immediately upgrade the less-than-honourable discharge of an estimated 75,000 persons discharged from the Armed Services for homosexuality since World War II, so these persons may not be deprived of jobs, unemployment compensation and veterans' benefits.[715]

The agenda issued by the NGTF to participants at the meeting shows that their earnest, heart-felt presentations were the result of a great deal of hard work and planning, and that they were carefully designed to focus on verifiable flaws in the way in which US laws were administered while also tugging at the heartstrings. For example, NGTF focused on the fact that some of the many Americans given dishonourable discharges from the army had also been in receipt of medals for extreme bravery.[716] As will be explained in the next chapter, Carter and his administration would immediately and successfully act on both issues on which the NGTF required immediate action, while they would also organize the meetings with the Federal agencies and address any other issue raised in the White House meeting.

Aftermath

A few days after the meeting, Costanza sent Carter a memo about the details of what was discussed.[717] According to Costanza, Carter did not respond to any kind of explicit way to the meeting. She said that there was "no special reaction … he didn't say gee, that was awful,

[715] News from the NGTF, 31 March 1977, "NGTF-Federal Agency Meetings Set Second White House Conference in September." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.
[716] Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller, the White House Agenda. 8 February 1977. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.
[717] Memorandum from Margaret Costanza to President Carter, 8 April 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. *JCPL*.

why did you do it. Or gee, that was great, I'm glad you did it."[718] Professor Mattingly told the author that Carter never complained to Costanza about the meeting or anything else generally.[719]

Immediately after the meeting, Costanza told CBS Television, "I just wish that the citizens of this nation could have joined me in that room to listen to the examples of oppression I heard today. Perhaps the issue of homosexuality would be better understood and perhaps more widely accepted in this country if they could have heard what I did." Robert Malsom, told NGTF representatives that they had made a "brilliant and very moving" presentation. Lutkefedder, who had attended many such White House sessions, found this to be "the most professional job I've seen."[720]

Professor Bunch remembered in a personal interview that "it was an amazing meeting, I mean absolutely the, the excitement, the expectation, the sense that we were making history as the first openly gay meeting in the White House with… a representative of the President, was very exciting and there was a sense that Midge really did have an inroad, she was personal friends with the President and that we really had someone whose voice would be heard. [After the meeting] Oh, we felt great. Yeah, I felt great, I think most of us felt good. I think we didn't know what would come of it, I don't think that we were promised anything except an open door but that was the first open door, so at least my memory of it was feeling very happy that we had gotten that far. It was a huge symbolic moment and I think those moments are really important [even if] they're not always so concrete in terms of "this then happened."[721]

[718] Midge Costanza interviews to Dudley Clendinen, 1994-1995. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[719] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[720] News from the NGTF, 31 March 1977, "NGTF-Federal Agency Meetings Set Second White House Conference in September." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.
[721] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.

The following day, *The Washington Post* reported members of the NGTF as saying that it represented "a happy milestone on the way to full equality for gay men and women," and Elaine Noble, gay rights activist and state representative from Massachusetts, as saying that she was "surprised the Carter administration made as many commitments as it did, to open doors for us," comparing the situation favourably to that during the Kennedy administration, when all of their requests for a meeting had been ignored.[722]

Costanza spoke movingly about the testimony she had heard about discrimination, and affirmed that the Carter administration viewed the situation facing homosexuals as an important human rights issue.[723] The NGTF's great hope had been to find a friend in the White House in President Carter. They had certainly found a friend in Costanza. In a newspaper interview, shortly after the meeting, Costanza pointed out that, while she did not agree with everything Carter had said about homosexuals, he had the most positive track record of any American President to date, especially in saying that he did not see homosexuality as a threat. She stressed his proven record in the area of human rights, and the fact that he had not capitulated to the demands of anti-gay rights activists. Of the direct impact of the meeting on the homosexual community in America and its relationship with the White House, Costanza said: "At the outset you have to admit that simply the symbolic gesture of holding the meeting has brought about a great deal of activity. There has been a rising of consciousness and new organization in the gay community. Gays had not been welcome or invited ever before to the White House. Concretely? There are meetings being held with the Justice Department, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other agencies. Gays are getting this

[722] Scott (*The Washington Post*), 27 March 1977, "Carter Aide Meets with Gay Activists." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[723] Scott (*The Washington Post*), 27 March 1977, "Carter Aide Meets with Gay Activists." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.

and that's concrete. There is a commitment from me and from these agencies to continue the dialogue with the gay community."[724]

At a NGTF press conference only a few hours after the meeting, O'Leary stated that this was "the first time in the history of this country that a President has seen fit to acknowledge the rights and needs of some 20 million Americans. This meeting was a happy milestone on the road to full equality under law for gay women and men, and we are highly optimistic that it will soon lead to complete fulfilment of President Carter's pledge to end all forms of Federal discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."[725]

A press release that followed declared this as a triumphant note, announcing that a follow-up meeting would be held in September 1977; that Costanza would recommend a meeting with Carter himself; that various crucial issues had been discussed, including those involving prisons, immigration and naturalisation, and announcing future meetings between the NGTF and a range of government officials to discuss their concerns. The press release also stated: "Ms. Costanza also promised to relay several special requests to the President, who was asked to "champion the cause" of human rights for gay Americans the way he has done for oppressed minorities around the world."[726]

The newsletter also contained a series of self-congratulatory remarks about how well the presentation had gone, and how moved and impressed attendees had been. Overall, the NGTF had many very good reasons to feel optimistic.[727] Brydon said about it, "In political terms, the White House project is the most important NGTF undertaking in terms of practical results benefitting lesbians and gay men."[728]

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[724] *People*. Gay Rights Proponent at the White House. 9 July 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[725] News from NGTF, 26 March 1977, "Gays Optimistic After Historic White House Session." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 24, CU.
[726] News from NGTF, 31 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.
[727] News from NGTF, 31 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.
[728] Charles Brydon report to the NGTF Board, 6 February1979. NGTF records, Box 6, Folder 4, CU.

Less than a month later, *The Advocate*, the national newspaper of the gay rights movement, provided a lengthy and positive review of the meeting under the title "Concrete Results Soon?" O'Leary was quoted as saying: "In the next two or three years we will see federal agencies one by one reverse their policies, once they see that it is not just us, but 20 million people supporting us. [Gay people can expect] a couple of victories and a lot of attitude change because of the publicity."[729] Recalling the meeting from the distance of 1993, O'Leary said: "I think this meeting meant a lot to the whole community. It meant that we had been recognised by the highest institutional establishment in our country. And for gay people who were looking for signs, for symbols, for recognition, for anything along those lines that would make their lives valid, it was a wonderful breakthrough."[730]

C.I.A. homosexual employers

An illustration of the immediate effect of the White House meeting is the issue of homosexual employers of the C.I.A., an issue that has never been examined before. At the end of Carter's staff meeting that followed immediately after Costanza's and Haft's meeting with the gay rights activists, Admiral Stansfield Turner, Director of the C.I.A., asked Costanza whether Carter had approved the meeting. Costanza replied, "No, but he didn't disapprove either, what's the problem?" Turner replied that he had "discovered some gays in the CIA" and that he had to "dispose of them," so he needed to know "what is the policy on gays from the Oval Office." Costanza then said "Listen, I'm going to tell you right now that Jimmy Carter has stated over and over again, that he does not support discrimination against anybody. Now, I want to call and find out who you're talking about here." Turner replied that this was a policy he had "nothing to do with" and that he wanted "to do this in an acceptable

[729] *The Advocate*, 22 April 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[730] Marcus, 1993: 270.

way to the White House" and suggested offering them ("gays in the CIA") "a chance to resign" or he would have "to put something in their files." Costanza was aware of the situation with the gay CIA agents as some of them had written to her and to the NGTF trying to find out what they should do, while she had also spoken to one of them. Costanza feared that putting something in the agents' file could jeopardise their futures and felt that resignation was the best way out. She considered an offer to resign was "better than anyone else had ever done" in such a situation.[731]

This study is not in a position to know what happened to these agents. We should remember, however, that Carter opposed anti-homosexual discrimination in any federal sector apart from the security services, including the CIA, where he felt homosexuals were vulnerable to blackmail. Carter's Civil Service Reform Act protected 95% of the homosexuals in the federal sector, apart from the security services. However by 1980, conditions for homosexuals in the security services would improve significantly.

Reaction to the White House meeting

The meeting received extensive coverage in the mainstream press. Carter and Costanza "received an enormous amount of criticism and abuse."[732] It rallied anti-gay activists, and even ordinary, not especially politicised Americans, to express their horror that homosexuals had been in the White House, even though Carter and his family were not actually there at the time.[733] Of course, the meeting could not have gone ahead without Carter's nod of approval. He was known to be a micromanager and, as Eric Marcus told the author "if Carter had not wanted Costanza to meet with the NGTF, I am sure that she would not have. Clearly he was playing some kind of balancing act."[734]

[731] Midge Costanza interviews to Dudley Clendinen, 1994-1995. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[732] Letter from Midge Costanza to James Woodward, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[733] For example, *Miami News*, 15 February, 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[734] Eric Marcus in a personal interview, 18 February 2015.

The White House received several letters from irate citizens complaining about the meeting, such as one woman, identified as "Inquirer Reader" [sic] who wrote in response to an article about gay rights in the *National Enquirer*. She reflected anti-gay rights campaigners' assertion that homosexuality was a moral and not a political matter, and that therefore people campaigning for homosexual rights should not attend meetings in the White House. The *Enquirer* had also included a poll, in which readers could vote as to whether or not they approved of the NGTF attending a meeting at the White House. 79.9% of the respondents (the *Enquirer*'s readership was typically very conservative) reportedly believed that White House staff should not have met members of the NGTF to discuss their concerns.[735] Responding to "Inquirer Reader" Costanza wrote, "This presidency… belongs to all people. We cannot allow one or two people in this nation to decide who participates with their government and who doesn't." In an intensely personal response, Costanza went on to say, "The issue is not whether you accept homosexuality or not. The issue is whether any citizen of this nation should be discriminated against and harassed."[736] Costanza's tone was curt, but her message was consistent with Carter's; while not wishing to offend evangelicals, throughout his campaign he had insisted that human rights were for everybody.

In a series of communications to the White House, the Christian Anti-Defamation League denounced the administration's admission of the NGTF for talks, and demanded the right to a meeting to discuss various matters, including ways in which homosexuals could be identified and, assuming that homosexuality was often an illness, effectively treated.[737] Catholic Americans had already expressed their horror before the meeting. The front page of

[735] *Enquirer* Reader Poll, no date. Margaret Costanza's Subject Files, 1977 – 1978, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[736] Costanza's Response to Why She Met the NGTF, n.d. Margaret Costanza's Subject Files, 1977 – 1978, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) Folder 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), File 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[737] Letter from Reverend H Roy Anderson of the Christian Anti-Defamation League to Jody Powell, Press Secretary. 25 April 1977. Gay Issues. Folder 5/77 (O/A 4479), File 05/1977 - 05/1977. JCPL.

the *National Catholic Register* proclaimed that "One of President Carter's top assistants will meet with ten members of a sexual deviate organisation…" and quoted one Gary Potter, executive director of Catholics for Christian Political Action, as saying: "Catholics and other Christians, especially family people, should write letters to the President and send copies to their senators and representatives expressing their strong belief that as taxpayers they are opposed to the public employment of anyone who acknowledges himself or herself as a practicing homosexual. Potter also stated his opposition to any actions that would confer "respectability or social acceptance on the practice of homosexuality."[738]

Also criticising the meeting was a group of clergy from New York, who accused Carter of ignoring the Bible's teachings and of "lending respectability to the breakdown of moral values."[739] A conservative newsletter, *The Voice of Florida*, described the meeting as "a delegation of sodomites who wanted to talk about their rights," and stated that it "certainly has raised very strong doubts whether President Carter is really a born-again Southern Baptist as he claims."[740] Other conservative voices also railed against homosexuality and its supposed pernicious impact on society. Podhoretz, editor of the conservative magazine *Commentary*, wrote of "the male self-hatred pervading the gay rights campaign" and described homosexuality as a "plague" attacking "the vital organs of the entire species, preventing men from fathering children and women from mothering them." He also attributed pacifism in both England and America (which he clearly considered a bad thing) to the influence of homosexuals in public life.[741]

Evangelicals were also utterly unhappy with Carter and the meeting and despite the fact that he did not attend it, it was a turning point in his relationship with them. Several

[738] Carter Aide Meets Gays. National Catholic Register. 27 March 1977, Vol Liii, no. 13. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[739] *New York Post*. 5 June 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[740] Young, 2014: 490.
[741] Podhoretz, 2004: 127.

prominent leaders denounced Carter for allowing it to happen. For example, Anita Bryant said: "Behind the high sounding appeal against discrimination in jobs and housing – which is not a problem to the closet homosexual – they are really asking to be blessed in their abnormal lifestyle by the office of the President of the United States."[742] Several prominent evangelicals also wrote to Carter expressing their clear disappointment with him for allowing such a meeting to take place. For example, James Blackwood, of the Blackwood Brothers, an American southern gospel quartet and pioneers of the Christian music, wrote "… I want to object to the action of Midge Costanza, a member of your staff, in meeting with a group of homosexuals in the White House and her public stand against Anita Bryant in the Miami, Florida homosexual issue… I submit that we are fast becoming another Sodom and Gomorrah unless we take a stand and cause a turnaround in the moral and spiritual conduct of our nation."[743]

Costanza also received her share of several critical and often very aggressive letters. For example, one by G.P. Schwartzkopf who wrote, "In an administration noted for its obnoxious pestle [sic] (on top of being the most incompetent in American history) you certainly rank at the top… Trying to get across the message that queers are just like other people is simple and pure nonsense as well as being so incredibly stupid as to boggle the mind. Also please tell me exactly what "human rights" are being denied to queers? Your major contribution to our country is to maintain a low profile, keep your mouth shut on issues you know nothing about and prepare for leaving Washington no later than the 1980 elections."[744]

Within the White House, not everyone was impressed with Costanza's firm approach to gay rights and other social issues. One of them was Hamilton Jordan who asked her

[742] Romano *(The Blade),* April 1977. "Task Force Gathers in White House; Gays Meet with Carter Aides." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[743] Letter from James Blackwood to Carter, 28 June 1977. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[744] Letter from G.P. Schwartzkopf to Costanza, 13 May 1978. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

immediately after the meeting "did the queers leave?"[745] He later criticised Costanza in a memo to Carter labelling her as "a conduit to outside groups and organizations, the perception here is that she listens to persons espousing liberal positions and causes and not to others."[746] Eight months after the meeting, *Newsweek* reported that "one of the President's men," described her as "an embarrassment" and that "Everyone wishes she would disappear."[747]

For many, the issue of gay rights seems to have been considered trivial; for others, homosexuality was simply wrong. All of the staff must have been aware of the threat that attention to gay rights posed to Carter's relationship with the evangelical right. Carter may have underestimated what a milestone the meeting in the White House would be, both for gay rights activists involved and for their opponents. While he was unwavering in his commitment to human rights, including gay rights to a large extent, he also felt that homosexuals' concerns were not a central issue, but a subset of human rights. In a difficult economic climate, he may have resented being distracted by it. Of Costanza and her fervent attachment to the cause, he wrote in his diary: "I've been concerned by her involvement in the abortion and gay rights business, but she takes a tremendous burden off me by seeing groups that would insist on seeing me if they couldn't see her."[748]

On the other hand, not all gay rights activists were happy with either the NGTF's efforts or Carter's response, as they seemed to want more actions and faster. Gary van Ooteghem, a prominent gay rights activist and former NGTF board member, sent an angry letter to Haft in 1977, "You and Costanza, *both* should also realize that many of us out here are witnessing the erosion of our own access to the president" because of the "preferential

[745] Midge Costanza interviews to Dudley Clendinen, 1994-1995. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[746] Memo of Hamilton Jordan to Carter, n.d. Hamilton Jordan Files, Box 34, Folder Midge Costanza. JCPL.
[747] Mattingly and Boyd, 2013: 371.
[748] Balmer, 2013: 99.

treatment" given to co-directors of the NGTF Voeller and O'Leary. "It is absolutely mad to believe that only those two can and will represent all of us."[749]

MORE MEETINGS WITH THE NGTF

Costanza and Haft obliged and arranged for the NGTF to meet with all the agencies that the organization requested. For example, in September 1977 the NGTF met with representatives from the Public Health Service (PHS)[750] and a few months later with Norman Carlson, Director of the Bureau of Prisons.[751] As requested and agreed, Costanza and Haft also met again with the NGTF in a series of meetings at the end of April 1977,[752] and another one held by the NGTF and the Commission for Civil Rights in October 1977.[753]

As we will see in the next chapter, Costanza and Haft would arrange several other meetings between the NGTF and Governmental Agencies. Haft told the author that there was "no pressure from any groups or individuals" to have such meetings and that "this was done solely because Midge and I thought it was a good thing to do, me for professional reasons and Midge for personal reasons."[754]

That there was support for these meetings from at least some members of Congress is evident in a letter sent to Costanza by Congressman Paul McCloskey, expressing his admiration for President Carter's "courageous political initiative"[755] and similar missives

[749] Letter from Gary van Ooteghem to Marilyn Haft, 31 August 1977. Marilyn Haft's Files, 1/77-4/77 Folder, Box 23. JCPL.
[750] Memorandum from Marilyn Haft to Margaret Costanza, 8 September 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[751] NGTF Monthly Newsletter, "NGTF Meets with Bureau of Prisons Director." May 1978. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70, CU.
[752] White House Memorandum, 11 April 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[753] Letter from Costanza to Commissioner Fleming, 19 October 1977, Margaret Costanza's Subject Files, Gay Rights Correspondence, 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978. JCPL.
[754] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[755] Letter from Paul N. McCloskey to Margaret Costanza, 8 March 1977, Margaret Costanza's Subject Files, Gay Rights: Correspondence 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978. JCPL.

from Charles Rangel, [756] Henry Waxman, [757] John Burton, [758] and Edward Koch.[759] The breakthrough meeting also garnered enthusiastic support from the Alice B. Toklas Memorial Club, the first registered Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender club in the US, which had been formed in San Francisco two years after the Stonewall riots.[760] The Club wrote to Carter praising him for taking a stand on the issue of gay rights; something, they said, that no other world leader had done.[761] The Women's Action Alliance wrote a warm letter to O'Leary and Voeller, reminding them that support for the aims of the NGTF extended far beyond the gay community.[762] Support for the meeting was also expressed by representatives from the City of Madison, Wisconsin.[763]

Impact of the Meetings between Gay Rights Activists and Carter's Administration

Apart from the quest for equal rights and an end to sexual discrimination, the other equally important aim of the gay rights activists in the 1970s was for the visibility and legitimacy of their movement. They longed for the normality that such an acknowledgment would represent. In the following chapters, we will see the lengths gay rights activists went to in search of these attributes. The White House meeting and the subsequent contacts extended to their movement the visibility and legitimacy they wanted so badly.

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[756] Letter from Charles B. Rangel to President Carter, 2 March 1977, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[757] Letter from Henry A. Waxman to President Carter, 3 March 1977, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[758] Letter from John L. Burton to President Carter on 11 March 1977, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[759] Letter from Edward I. Koch to President Carter, 21 March 1977, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[760] http://www.alicebtoklas.org/history-of-alice/retrieved 15 April 2014.
[761] Letter from D.N. Hughes-Oldenburg to President Carter, 5 March 1977, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[762] Letter from Ruth J. Abram, Executive Director of the Women's Action Alliance, to Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller, 22 March, 1977, (National Gay Task Force Correspondence) 9/76-2/78 (O/A 4499), 09/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
[763] Letter from James D. Keadon, Chairperson Eighth District, City of Madison, to Margaret Costanza. 18 March 1977, Margaret Costanza's Subject Files, Gay Rights: Correspondence, 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978. JCPL.

In the mid-1970s, the NGTF and the gay rights movement generally were modest in size and without any notable successes to show for their efforts. Neither the White House nor the federal agencies were prepared to dialogue with them and the lack of any substantial advance was the main reason for the inactivity of many would-be activists. Eddie Sandifer told the author that many gay men were reluctant to organise because they did not want to expose themselves, but importantly because they saw no point in it. Their view was, "Why bother joining a group that cannot really achieve something?" Sandifer said, "Most of the groups at the time were limited to talks among their members and they were more like social clubs than interest groups."[764] However, this changed during Carter's presidency.

The breakthrough meeting and the subsequent meetings that followed between Costanza, Haft and gay rights activists were as much a milestone in the modern gay rights movement as the Stonewall Riot. The New York riot had galvanised gay rights activists by providing a focus for their anger, but the White House meeting had multiple effects. First, it showed homosexuals that President Carter was listening to them, and that their voices could make a difference. Equally important, the meeting meant that the gay rights movement and the gay community were recognised by the highest authority in the country, thereby offering what they had been seeking for so many years, namely respect, visibility and legitimacy. Just two days after the meeting, the *New York Post* confirmed this in an article entitled "From Closet to Street to Respect."[765]

Ron Gold, a long-time civil rights activist and a member of the NGTF, said shortly after the meeting that it "will have an important psychological effect. It was on television and people saw all these pariahs entering the temple."[766] About a year later, Costanza said that the

[764] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.
[765] Lipsyte (*New York Post*), 28 March 1977, "From Closet to Street to Respect." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[766] Lipsyte (*New York Post*), 28 March 1977, "From Closet to Street to Respect." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

White House meeting "was regarded by those who attended as a major breakthrough for gay rights, the long history of abuses finally received recognition in the highest offices of this country. The gay movement was finally legitimized."[767]

Carter's attitude towards gay rights thus played a major, if largely unrecognised, role in the expansion of the movement. Many more people joined the gay rights movement as a result of seeing that, collectively, they could make a difference – they would be heard, and their efforts would result in tangible outcomes. It is essential to remember that, in the mid-1970s, gays were seen by the majority as outcasts in society, and most were utterly marginalised. Carter's attitude towards gays – very progressive at the time for a mainstream politician – showed America that they were legitimate members of society who deserved to air their concerns, and who were respected by the highest office in the land. From this point on, gay rights activists were increasingly visible across a broad spectrum of society. It became more difficult for their detractors to portray them as a fringe group of sexual deviants as it became increasingly evident that not only were most just ordinary citizens who were unfairly discriminated against on the grounds of sexual identity, but that they could articulate their demands for recognition and inclusion clearly, and be listened to by the highest authority of all.

The newfound legitimacy that the meetings lent the gay rights movement can be seen as a major resource that activists were able to capitalise upon in the years that followed, along with the greatly enhanced diplomatic and negotiating skills that leading activists had developed in the process. The NGTF modelled to gay rights activists all over the country the sort of behaviours and approaches that had the capacity to grant them access to leaders with the power to make dramatic changes in the area of gay rights.

[767] Letter from Midge Costanza to James Woodward, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

Louie Crew told the author that while he did not go to the meeting himself, he is "aware that it raised consciousness. And it also raised consciousness of LGBT people, about the possibilities of political action." Crew also commented that the women of the NGTF, "were by and large the most outspoken and the most articulate because they'd learned all their politics already through the women's movement."[768] In a personal interview, Jeffrey Montgomery stated: "With Carter we realised that we could make a real difference by getting organised, by which I mean going beyond the marches and the protests. At the time, we were amazed to be invited to the White House. Something that seemed literally unthinkable was actually going to happen! I don't think that any of us actually expected it to happen when we started our struggle. Yes, I would certainly agree that these meetings and Carter's attitude were instrumental in legitimising our movement in the eyes of Americans and helping it to grow… I would certainly agree that when President Carter accepted us into the White House, he was indicating this respect for us and our movement."[769]

Eddie Sandifer told the author that "it's hard to explain to younger people what a big deal the meeting at the White House was. To people who have grown up with a much great degree of acceptance of gays, it probably doesn't seem like such a big thing. But at the time, when most of society thought that we were monsters, or mentally ill, or both, it was huge. You have to remember how many gay people were basically disowned by their families in those days. And then here was Carter, the president, a sort of father to the whole nation, saying essentially, "Ok, maybe I don't understand the whole thing, but come to the White House, and we'll talk."[770]

Donald Hallman stated in a personal interview that "these meetings and Carter certainly played an important role in our movement getting stronger and bigger. It created a

[768] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[769] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016.
[770] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview 26 February 2016.

lot of promise and expectations. Now, unfortunately, most of those were quickly shattered by Reagan. But I think, overall, our movement, or at least those who are aware of what he did, is very grateful to President Carter for opening his doors for us and listening to us. It had a profound effect on us directly and on American society in general. After that, we were on our way to being seen as equals with the same rights that all the other Americans enjoyed and took for granted, rather than outcasts."[771]

David Mack Henderson told the author that "up until that meeting, gay rights protests were often angry and flamboyant… in retrospect, one can see that it was maybe hard for the average American to empathise with or understand the concerns of men and women who seemed to portray themselves as radically different from them in every way. At the meeting, and in the years that followed, increasingly gay rights activists showed America that they were just the same as everyone else in most respects. It really helped to drag gay people out of the pariah class and into the mainstream."[772]

What the first White House meeting gave the gay community, apart from legitimacy and an aura of respectability, was access to areas of government which led to a number of practical gains. Carter helped activists engage directly with federal agencies about issues that concerned them. These meetings often resulted in significant advances for the movement, none of which would have been possible without the intervention of Carter's administration. The results of these meetings and their outcome will be examined in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

Shortly after taking office, Carter gave a top White House job to an ardent feminist and outspoken gay rights activist, appointed acknowledged homosexuals to his cabinet and to

[771] Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.
[772] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.

public positions, and agreed to a ground-breaking meeting in the White House with gay rights activists. This was followed by working meetings between members of his administration and the NGTF. It was the first time gay rights activists had ever been invited to the White House and certainly the first time a dialogue took place with the President of the United States. By meeting, speaking and listening to them, Carter officially acknowledged the existence of homosexuals and normalised relations between activists and the government. Such a scenario, even a year earlier, would have seemed impossible. As we will see in the next chapter, the White House meeting led to the facilitation by Carter's administration of a series of meetings between gay rights activists and Federal agencies, which led to several important practical gains for homosexual Americans.

Carter took gays and lesbians out of shadows not only by appointing openly homosexual men and women to his cabinet and to federal positions but by meeting with activists right there in the White House. This was unprecedented visibility and legitimisation for the gay community, making its members equal to their fellow Americans. Costanza herself, along with the symbolism implicit in appointing a radical feminist, and a gay rights activist, to an important liaison role in the White House, can be seen as an important resource to the gay rights movement of the 1970s. Costanza was not just an ally in the White House; she was also an indicator of the fact that Carter saw gay rights as a legitimate endeavour, and respected gay rights activists. The presence of Costanza, along with other openly homosexual aides in the White House, contributed substantially to the legitimacy of the gay rights movement in the eyes of a growing number of Americans, helping to establish them as a mainstream aspect of the progressive movement in general.

The fact that a culturally significant official body – namely the presidency – endorses and takes the homosexual community seriously for the first time, thereby officially legitimising it, clearly is a contribution to cultural framing. At the same time, this "official

legitimisation" is also a resource for gay rights activists, in the sense that organisations get access to the White House and to Federal agencies. Therefore, Carter here makes simultaneously a contribution to cultural framing and to the creation of organisational resources, both extremely important for gay rights activists.

Resource mobilisation theory gives us a way to understand the profound impact of Costanza's invitation of the NGTF to the White House. First of all, it helps to understand that gay rights activists were, by definition, responding to the ways in which the institution of government was built in such a way as to discriminate against them and limit their access to crucial resources. At the same time, counter movements, notably the evangelical right, were agitating to maintain control of, or gain more access to, resources.

Understanding access to the White House as a crucial resource,[773] we can see that Carter's presidency was a time when both groups were galvanised to work towards the goal of greater access to him. Only Carter and his senior advisors were in a position to make the decisions necessary for change to occur, or to make the decisions necessary to prevent changes from taking place, and convincing this elite cohort that a particular movement was worthwhile was essential. Both the gay rights movement and the evangelical right were extremely conscious of this. For this reason, both movements battled for access to decision makers; for the cultural capital that they would gain from being able to demonstrate that the elite was on their side, for the social capital implicit in having direct connections to people in positions of authority and influence, and for the symbolic capital that they would gain from visibly engaging with those people. In the process of gaining this capital, they were also able to bolster their support from the general population – essential if a real break-though was to take place–, and increase the number of people prepared to get involved in activism.

[773] Buechler, 1999.

Importantly, the White House meetings made gay rights activists aware of their power and persuaded them that they could bring about policy changes by getting organised since now they had people in high places that they could talk to. In this way, they could enter mainstream politics as interest groups, and have their voices heard, even engage in dialogue with the President and his representatives in the White House. This had a massive effect on the growth of the gay rights movement as homosexuals realised that it was worth joining. The symbolic and practical importance of these historic events should not be underestimated. As Noble, quoted above, pointed out, the gay rights movement was surprised that Carter's administration actually opened as many doors as it did.

CHAPTER FIVE

CARTER'S RESPONSES TO THE EMERGING GAY RIGHTS AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to examine Carter's policies and decisions in regard to gay rights and the positive results they achieved for homosexual Americans. Using a wide range of archival documents, interviews, contemporary newspaper articles and other sources, the chapter explores issues which confronted Carter during his tenure and the decisions he made which improved the circumstances of homosexuals at the time. Some of these policies and decisions are under-examined, some have been completely ignored and some are entirely forgotten. In addition, this chapter also examines in some cases the impact of Carter's gay rights policies, as well as the reaction to these policies by both the evangelical right and the gay rights activists.

The issues, and Carter's responses, are addressed one by one:

ACCESS TO FEDERAL AGENCIES

A major problem for the gay community at this time was access to federal agencies. Officials largely ignored correspondence and requests for meetings from activists. "It was very difficult, no-one was even willing to meet us," Louie Crew of the NGTF told the author.[774] And Eddie Sandifer of the Mattachine Society, also in a personal interview, said, "Even corresponding with them was difficult since most of the times our letters were ignored."[775]

In the breakthrough White House meeting in March 1977, gay rights activists raised the issue of homosexuals working in some federal agencies and government departments and

[774] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[775] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.

their belief that a discrimination policy operated against them. In question were the Department of Defence, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Immigration and Naturalization, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the US Commission on Civil Rights, the State Department and the US Civil Service Commission.[776] Knowing that it could not reach these areas on its own, the NGTF asked the White House to assist by arranging meetings.[777]

Carter's response

The White House response was swift. On March 28, only two days after the big White House meeting, Costanza briefed Carter about the problem of the NGTF's access to parts of government and set out a plan of action, which Carter immediately endorsed. Costanza stated that, "In the coming weeks I will arrange meetings with agencies and departments mentioned above so that officials involved can directly learn of NGTF positions, and so legitimate problems can be addressed and corrected. It is my feeling that this direct kind of communication between the government and NGTF will be to the advantage of everyone involved."[778] Securing Carter's consent, Costanza and her deputy Marilyn Haft went to work on their plan.[779]

After consulting with Jean O'Leary, Haft proposed that the meetings of the NGTF and the federal agencies would be three weeks apart and that the first meeting should not take place before April 28, 1977, to allow time for preparation.[780] The first meeting duly took

[776] Memorandum from Margaret Costanza to President Carter, 8 April 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[777] Memorandum from Marilyn G Haft to Margaret Costanza, 11 April 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, container 4. JCPL.
[778] Costanza's memorandum to the President. 28 March 1977. Follow up report on meeting with representatives of the NGTF on March 26, 1977. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[779] Memorandum of Marilyn Haft to Margaret Costanza, 31 June 1977, "1/20/77-1/20/81," Box FG-114, WHCF. JCPL.
[780] Memorandum of Marilyn Haft to Margaret Costanza, 11 April 1977. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

place on April 28, 1977, a month after the White House meeting, and brought together the NGTF and officials from the Justice Department, with Costanza and Haft also attending.[781] There followed meetings between the NGTF and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Public Health Service, the Department of Defence, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the Department of State, thus all the agencies the NGTF had wanted to meet.[782] The outcome of some of these meetings will be discussed later in this chapter.

Costanza believed these meetings to be a major contribution by the Carter presidency towards gay rights. She noted that meetings requested by the gay community had also taken place with Norman Carlson, Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons; Leonel J. Castillo, Commissioner of the Immigration, and Naturalization Service; and Julius Richmond, the Surgeon General.[783] The White House continued arranging meetings between the NGTF and government departments and agencies until the end of Carter's presidency.

Costanza and Haft not only arranged the meetings but attended them, thereby demonstrating the importance which the White House attached to issues of concern to homosexuals. Government was left in no doubt that Carter cared about the issues discussed. The presence of presidential aides at the meetings continued even after Costanza and Haft were gone, emphasising the continuing interest of the administration in gay issues.

Shortly before the 1980 elections, Carter's Presidential Committee highlighted the meetings as a significant accomplishment of his presidency, saying in a letter to the NGTF, "For too long, the doors of the federal government were closed to too many Americans. Jimmy Carter has opened those doors and he intends to see that they remain open … in the

[781] News from the NGTF. n.d. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 34. CU.
[782] Letter from Midge Costanza to unknown recipient, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[783] Letter from Midge Costanza to James Woodward, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

area of public policy decisions, gay concerns now have an equal opportunity to be heard and have been made part of the public process, with demonstrable results."[784]

In addition to arranging and attending the departmental/agency meetings, archival records show that Costanza and Haft worked for the advancement of gay rights in other forums. For instance, a memorandum from Haft to Costanza on June 7, 1977, stated, "My week was spent working on issues concerning the arts, gay and civil rights, international human rights …" Other reports from Haft to Costanza would contain references to "gay rights" as among the issues she had worked on during a particular week.[785] Periodically, Haft would meet NGTF members in the White House without Costanza, to discuss each side's progress and address unresolved issues.[786]

In a personal interview, Marilyn Haft stated that Carter was aware of the White House discussions and of the meetings which she and Costanza set up between the Federal agencies and the NGTF. She said there was "no pressure from any groups or individuals" to arrange such meetings and that "it was done solely because Midge and I thought it was a good thing to do, me for professional reasons and Midge for personal reasons."[787] Eric Marcus said in a personal interview, "I am sure that Costanza would not have arranged any of these meetings and would not have taken such initiatives if Carter did not approve."[788] Eddie Sandifer told the author, "It is funny how things changed for us when Costanza became Carter's assistant. Everyone opened their doors for us. Of course it was not that she was Costanza, but because she was the President's assistant…"[789]

[784] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[785] Several Marilyn Haft's weekly memos to Costanza. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[786] Memorandum from Meg McAleer to Office of Public Liasion, 16 March 1978. Midge Costanza Archives, MCI; Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[787] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[788] Eric Marcus in a personal interview 18 February 2015.
[789] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.

Costanza's influence and the power given to her by her position as Carter's assistant will be clearly demonstrated later in this chapter. The role of the White House in arranging these meetings and securing positive results for the gay community is indisputable. It would have been almost impossible for the NGTF to meet all these government officials without the intervention of Carter's administration. Louie Crew, a member of the Board of Directors of the NGTF at the time, told this author that it would have been "exceedingly unlikely" that the NGTF could get to meet such bodies without the intervention of Carter's aide, Costanza.[790]

David Mack Henderson told the author that "No-one would have listened to Costanza if she was not the President's assistant, that's for sure. She would not have had the power to arrange anything …" [791] Eddie Sandifer said in a personal interview, "I think that most changes that occurred during Carter's time were due to Costanza's endless efforts. But of course Costanza was Carter's assistant and Carter should get the credit, too... I don't think Costanza would have done all this without Carter knowing about it or approving and certainly the fact that she was his assistant was enough for people to open their doors to her and hear what she had to say."[792]

Apart from the practical gains of this programme, it had a significant impact on the gay rights discourse, which was probably even more important. Gay activists were now, for the first time, involved in direct dialogue with Federal agencies with the help and encouragement of the White House itself. This was of major significance for the gay community as its leaders were now taken seriously by the government and treated with respect. The change legitimised the gay rights movement in the eyes of both the State and the people, offering the NGTF credibility, respect and visibility. It also showed to the gay

[790] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[791] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[792] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.

community that by getting organized, they could find people in high places to listen to them and achieve policy change.

The importance of the White House's role in promoting contacts between gay leaders and the government is demonstrated by comparison with what happened when Carter left office. A letter to NGTF members from the board's co-chairs in December 1981, just twelve months after Reagan became President, said, "We have been shunned by the White House … our contacts at the numerous agencies of the federal government have been cut off or severely restricted."[793]

THE ISSUE OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Homosexuals were still vulnerable to being fired from government jobs well into the 1970s.[794] Before his election in 1976, Carter had said that nobody should discriminate against homosexuals at work or elsewhere, with the sole exception of homosexual individuals who worked in the military or in highly very sensitive government positions.[795] Gay rights activists were anxious to ensure that homosexuals would not be treated any differently in employment than heterosexuals. Before Carter, the Civil Service Commission had viewed homosexuality in and of itself as a factor that disqualified anyone from serving in federal employment. However, heterosexuals who engaged in "sodomy" and "fornication" were not similarly penalised.[796]

[793] "Dear Friend." NGTF Board of Directors announcement. December 1981. NGTF Records, Box 3, Folder 11, CU.
794 News from NGTF, 31 March 1977, Box 145, Folder 47, CU.
[795] "Gay Rights," n.d. Roberrt Malson files, Box 7, Civil Rights/Domestic Policy Staff. JCPL.
[796] Adamany, 1981: 221.

Carter's response: the Civil Service Reform Act

The NGTF and other activist groups quietly kept up their work and the White House under Carter did go some way towards meeting their demands regarding the Federal Employees issue. The Civil Service Commission held a meeting with the NGTF on October 12, 1977. The meeting was also attended by Costanza, who wrote to Commissioner Fleming on October 19 thanking him for permitting her to attend (which had required him to reorganise his schedule) and affirming that their respective offices had many interests in common.[797] Afterwards, the NGTF summarised the outcome of the meeting as follows: "The Commission has agreed to include anti-gay discrimination under its jurisdiction in a single area, 'the administration of justice' and it has followed this up by soliciting information from us on discriminatory police practices, as part of a current study in this area. It will also hear from gay witnesses in this area. It has also included gay leaders in a survey of national leaders' views on the major civil rights concerns of the future decade."[798]

By late October 1977, the Civil Service Commission had agreed to include gays in its jurisdiction, and to consider issues that included police brutality and refusal to protect homosexuals, differential treatment in prison, the enforcement of sodomy laws with homosexuals when the same behaviour in heterosexuals was ignored and issues around homosexuals in the military and in other positions of employment.[799]

Pressures increased on Carter to outlaw anti-gay discrimination in employment and a range of other areas. In November 1977, the National Women's Conference meeting in Houston, Texas (discussed in the next chapter) called on Congress, State and local legislatures to create laws that would ban discrimination based on sexual preference. A

[797] Letter from M. Costanza to Commissioner Fleming, 19 October 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771*)*, 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[798] NGTF Meeting Sheet. n.d. NGTF records, Box 145, folder 47, CU.
[799] Memorandum from Marilyn Haft to Margaret Costanza re meeting between the NGTF and the Civil Service Commission, 7 October 1977, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

resolution said that areas affected should include, but not be limited to, housing, public accommodation and facilities, the military, credit and public funding. [800] In February 1978, Carter came under further pressure from gay rights activists to issue an executive order banning such discrimination.[801] At first, Carter considered issuing an executive order, but on consideration, he decided to include a clause outlawing anti-gay discrimination in federal employment in the forthcoming Civil Service Reform Act. However, he intended to do so in a way that would not agitate the evangelical right any more than necessary.[802]

In a memorandum to Carter, Costanza commented that current legislation did, in fact, protect the gay community, but that they were likely to be annoyed by the lack of language that specifically addressed homosexual concerns. The proposed legislation prohibited discrimination on the grounds of "political affiliation, race, colour, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age or handicapping condition." It did not specifically mention sexual orientation. Costanza outlined the pros and cons of including a specific reference to homosexuality in the bill. She pointed out that its inclusion would be consistent with Carter's stance on human rights and supportive of up to twenty million gay Americans' struggle for civil rights.[803]

However, Costanza cautioned that including such a reference would expose the President to huge abuse from politically astute anti-gay activists and even risk rejection of the bill by Congress. In any case, she argued, gay workers should be protected by a landmark District Court decision in California in 1975 which prohibited discrimination against homosexuals. Just five days later, Costanza forwarded a second memorandum. In this, she

[800] NGTF Press release. 21 November 1977. Box 36, Folder 61. CU.
[801] News from NGTF, Press Release, "New York Mayor Calls on President to Issue Gay Rights Executive Order." 26 February 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 146. CU.
[802] Memorandum from Costanza to Carter, 16 February 1978, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[803] Memorandum from Costanza to Carter, 16 February 1978, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

reiterated the pros and cons of including specific wording to address gay concerns in the legislation.[804]

Carter's Civil Service Reform Act, the first large-scale revision of Civil Service laws in more than a century, was enacted by Congress on October 13, 1978. It outlawed discrimination in federal government employment on various grounds, including sexual orientation. In all, 95% of positions were made available to homosexual men or women, although some restrictions continued to apply in the military, the secret service and other areas considered to be "sensitive" to the national security. By 1980, "immoral sexual conduct" (often interpreted as homosexual behaviour) had been removed as a criterion for disqualifying a person from a position.[805] In the final year of his presidency, debate about the rights and wrongs of these restrictions continued.

Aftermath and reaction

Despite the passage of the Civil Service Reform Act, the NGTF and other gay rights activists were unhappy because federal security agencies such as the FBI and the CIA were exempted from rules prohibiting anti-gay discrimination.[806] However, it should be noted here that during the 1976 elections, Carter had made it very clear in a televised interview on the *Tomorrow Show* on NBC, that he wanted to end sexual discrimination in the federal sector, apart from security agencies such as the secret service, because he believed homosexuals employed there could be vulnerable to blackmail and this might endanger America's security.[807] Therefore, Carter had not backtracked on his pre-election promise.

[804] Memorandum from Costanza to Carter, 21 February 1978, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[805] Letter from Margaret Waxman, General Counsel, to Robert Malson, the White House, no date, 1980. Robert Malson Files, (Gay) – Homosexuals, (7/20/79-5/31/80), 07/20/1979 - 05/31/1980. 1980. JCPL.
[806] NGTF press release, October 1979. "Federal Agencies that Discriminate Against Gay Citizens." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[807] Transcript of Jimmy Carter discussing homosexuality with Tom Snyder on the *Tomorrow Show* on NBC television, 29 March 1976. Gay Rights Jimmy Carter's Views On. 10/76 O/A 5772. JCPL.

On October 14, 1979, some 25,000 homosexuals and supporters marched from the Capitol to the Washington Monument demanding more gay rights legislation. Conservative church-goers were unhappy about the Civil Service Reform Act but also because of the continuing visibility of the gay rights issue and advances made under Carter. A spokesman of the conservative Christian Voice announced, "We are declaring war on homosexuals." Ten days later, Rev. Richard Zone, executive director of Christian Voice, presented to the White House a petition signed by 40,000 church ministers across the country asking Carter "to resist efforts to legitimize homosexuality by giving special consideration under law to those who practice such acts." Another Christian Voice initiative was launched by Georgian Democrat Larry McDonald, a member of the organisation's advisory board. He announced plans for a bill that would exempt private religious schools from extending employment rights to teachers of a homosexual orientation.[808]

Carter received a large amount of correspondence from angry and "worried" conservative Christians expressing outrage that homosexuals were now allowed by law to work in a federal agencies.[809] A letter to Carter from Congressman Bill Nichols is typical. He wrote that he had "been contacted by many constituents over the past several months relative to your considering the issuance of an Executive Order eliminating discrimination against homosexuals in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. I would like to take this opportunity to voice my opposition to the issuance of such an order and would hope that you might carefully reconsider such action."[810]

On November 9, 1979, the NGTF wrote to Anne Wexler, Carter's assistant, who occupied the position once filled by Costanza, to let her know that they had already gathered

[808] Milloy and Tofani (*The Washington Post*), 15 October 1979: A1, "25,000 Attend Gay Rights Rally at the Monument"; Roeder (*Newsweek*), 30 July 1979: 19, "Voice against Gay Rights."
[809] Various in Gay Issues: Homophobic Correspondence 5/77 (O/A 4479), JCPL.
[810] Bill Nichols letter to President Carter, 19 February 1980. Robert Malson Files, Folder Gay Views 1980, Box 8. JCPL.

70,000 signatures in favour of their aims, which were to bar discrimination against homosexuals in all federal positions, including in the military and other "sensitive" areas.[811] On December 18, 1979 the NGTF in the person of Charles Brydon, amongst twelve other luminaries of the gay rights movement,[812] presented Wexler with a petition asking Carter to sign an Executive Order banning discrimination against homosexuals in all areas in federal employment.[813]

The text accompanying the petition, which had the support of liberal Governor Brown of California[814] again explicitly compared the struggle of the gay rights movement with that of the civil rights movement, and stated: "As was the case when President Truman acted to end institutionalized segregation within the armed services by executive order, so must President Carter act to reverse the government discrimination that places lesbians and gay men in the position of second class citizens."[815] Carter also received correspondence from the Mayor of New York, Ed Koch, stating his support of the petition's goals and his feeling that Carter's often-stated position on the importance of human rights could only be enhanced by his endorsement of the petition and its demands.[816]

First responses by the White House to the NGTF petition were lukewarm, but gay representatives were careful not to apply inordinate pressure. In an early meeting with presidential aides, representatives of gay groups were told that Carter had not made a decision but was continuing to explore the question of an executive order. Kay Whitlock, co-chair of the NGTF board, expressed warm appreciation for the attention being given to the

[811] Letter from Charles Brydon and Lucia Velaska to Anne Wexler, 9 November 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[812] Mailgram from the NGTF to the *New York Times*, 18 December 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[813] Office of the White House press secretary, media liaison. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[814] NGTF Press Release, 17 October 1979, Gay Task Force, National, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980, Container 7. JCPL.
[815] Statement of Kay Whitelock, Chairperson, NGTF, 19 December 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[816] Letter from Ed Koch to Carter, 18 December 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.

issue by the administration and for Carter's moves in other areas. Specifically, she referred to the Civil Service Reform Act and to a new sensitivity about gay issues such as the ending of discrimination in the Peace Corps, as well as the appointment of known lesbians to certain presidential commissions. However, Whitlock said that what particularly concerned the gay community were "institutional government attitudes" which led to the State Department refusing visas to foreign gays and prompted the dismissal of a young clerk in the FBI because he happened to be gay. Her bottom line was a request for meetings with White House staff to draft the executive order in question. The NGTF co-executive director, Charles Brydon, anxious to put a good face on the meeting, avoided criticism of the White House's less than enthusiastic response, indicating that he was keen to keep avenues of communication open. He said a wide range of issues had been covered, including access by gay prisoners to gay publications and religious services. On this matter, he said, the White House had promised to "actively intervene."[817]

Two days later, Carter's media liaison at the White House issued a press release concerning the petition which the NGTF had presented to the President, making the public aware of it.[818] Subsequently, evangelicals and fundamentalists rallied to denounce the petition. Bob Jones, a prominent evangelical and founder of the Bob Jones University in South Carolina, accused Carter of having a "soft attitude" towards homosexuals and stated that he was not "acting very 'Born again.'" Jones compared homosexuals unfavourably to murderers, stating that a murderer could come to Jesus if he repented, because he would not murder again, whereas a homosexual could not.[819]

[817] Green (*The Blade*), 20 December 1979: A3, "White House Cool to Plea on Executive Order."
[818] NGTF Press Release, 20 December 1979, (Gay) -- Homosexuals, (7/20/79-5/31/80), 07/20/1979 - 05/31/1980. JCPL.
[819] *The New York Times*, 23 December 1979, "Rights for Homosexuals Denounced by Preachers." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.

In March 1980, Jones turned from verbal denunciation to action when he led a delegation of fundamentalist ministers to the White House. There he presented petitions he said had been signed by 70,000 people opposing the extension of the Civil Rights Act to homosexuals. The petitions urged Carter not to give into pressures for an executive order in favour of employment of homosexuals. "Homosexuality must not become a protected way of life," Jones declared. The White House ignored Jones's' petitions.[820]

As for the NGTF petition of December 18, 1979, in some ways, it back-fired. The organization had added the names and addresses of signatories to their mailing lists, to the dismay of many closeted gays and heterosexuals who did not wish to receive mail from the organisation and had signed the petition on the understanding that they would not receive any such literature. The NGTF received correspondence protesting against their apparent misuse of the data.[821] The defensive way in which the NGTF responded to these letters[822] suggests tiredness and disappointment.

Eventually, the petition was unsuccessful. Despite suggestions that the White House would "mull over" the request for an Executive Order, the desired changes were not delivered.[823] However, in 1980, in the run-up to the forthcoming elections and after the White House's intervention, Alan Campbell of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management issued a memorandum which declared that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was now a prohibited personnel practice.[824] And the first sign of relaxation in the so-called "sensitive" areas came in December of 1980. It was discovered that a mid-level worker with the National Security Agency was homosexual. An in-depth investigation took place,

[820] *The Associated Press*, 21 March 1980, "Ministers Oppose Rights for Homosexuals."
[821] For example Bob Schwartz's letter to the NGTF, 26 November 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, folder 2, CU.
[822] Various examples. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[823] *The Washington Post*. 22 December, 1979, "White House Mulls Federal Ban on Bias toward Homosexuals." NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[824] Craig Howell in a personal interview, 19 March 2016.

probably the first of its kind in the intelligence community, with the result that the employee was allowed to keep both his job and his government security clearance.[825]

Progress in the employment area was one of Carter's greatest achievements in the area of gay rights; in particular, the Civil Service Reform Act was a major piece of legislation that dramatically changed the status quo. In March 1980, the NGTF received a detailed letter from the White House. The letter highlighted Carter's achievements in the area of gay rights and stressed the fact that his administration was determined to press ahead with its anti-discrimination policy. It pointed out that, under Carter, legislation now protected 95% of federal employees from discrimination if they were homosexuals.[826] The NGTF seems to have accepted this assessment of Carter's presidency. Shortly afterwards, they acknowledged that the Carter administration had done more to advance gay rights than any other. They issued a press release that enouranged/urged gay voters to consider Carter for re-election in the 1980 Presidential elections.[827]

Craig Howell, prominent gay rights activist and member of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance said in a personal interview about Carter and the Civil Service Reform Act:

"While what became the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 was being debated, nobody explicitly discussed the fact that it would effectively codify the various court rulings earlier in the 1970s that had overturned the Civil Service Commission's ban on hiring openly gay men or women in the federal civil service. So when Carter's people raised that point in the 1980 race against Senator Kennedy, I was very much surprised. Although the term 'sexual orientation' does not appear anywhere in the legislation, the new law did incorporate the so-called Nexus Standard the courts had used to say that gays could only be

[825] Jacobsen (*The Associated Press*), 30 December 1980, "National Security Agency Allows Homosexual to Keep Job."
[826] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[827] News from NGTF, 6 March 1980, "Carter Appeals for Gay Support." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.

excluded from employment if the government could demonstrate there was a nexus, or connection, between sexual orientation and the ability to carry out the duties of a government job. The head of the Office of Personnel Management (successor to the old CSC), Scotty Campbell, wrote a vital memo in May 1980 explicitly saying that the new law effectively prohibited discrimination in federal civilian employment on the basis of sexual orientation. We referred to the Campbell memo several times during subsequent Republican Administrations that tried to ignore that non-discrimination policy. All this counts very much in favour of President Carter's Administration."[828]

Jeffrey Montgomery admitted in a personal interview that, "the fact that federal employees who happened to be gay were now protected by law was a huge deal at the time."[829] David Mack Henderson told the author that "it was a great relief for countless thousands of gay employees when Carter made it possible for them to go to work and be themselves without having to worry about getting fired."[830]

IMMIGRATION

Immigration was a very important issue for gay right activists. The NGTF suggested that Carter's "action on this issue is considered by many gay leaders as the real test of his intentions concerning the gay community and the sincerity of the Administration's human rights policies."[831]According to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, "aliens affected with psychopathic personality, or sexual deviation, or a mental defect" were "ineligible to receive visas and shall be excluded from admission into the United States."[832] While many

[828] Craig Howell in a personal interview, 19 March 2016.
[829] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview 25 February 2016.
[830] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[831] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[832] Gay Rights, Robert Malson files, box 7, Civil Rights Cluster, Domestic Policy Staff. JCPL.

homosexuals had been excluded from the United States under this discriminatory law, it was often overlooked, [833] especially when it came to the entry of celebrities.[834]

In fact, the immigration issue was complex. The law stated that "aliens afflicted with psychopathic personality" could not enter America, and under law the Public Health Service (PHS) was required to inspect any new arrivals to ascertain whether or not this applied to them. From the 1950s, "sexual deviancy" had been explicitly included as a psychopathy, but in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association had removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, leading to Julius Richmond, Carter's Surgeon General, stating in 1978 that the PHS would no longer investigate it. This situation left the Immigration and Naturalization service in a legal quandary, and it issued a temporary directive that fudged the matter, saying that while it would no longer exclude homosexuals, they could be "pardoned" into the country, after which their cases would be given a final legal resolution.[835]

The United States was presented with a petition for "remedial legislation" from the Dutch government, which had been signed by an overwhelming majority of Dutch politicians and which pointed out the glaring inconsistency between the United States' position as a signatory of the Helsinki Agreement and its refusal to address the issue of homosexual immigrants.[836] Given that America had frequently cited "human rights" as a motivating factor in its military adventures overseas, this represented considerable grounds for embarrassment, especially as, during the pre-election debates, Carter himself had charged Republican candidate Ford with failing to enforce the Helsinki Agreement.[837]

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[833] Memorandum for Anne Wexler from Allison Thomas re. a meeting with Larry Bush, freelance reporter for gay media, 15 April 1980, Anne Wexler's Subject Files, Gay Issues, Container 105. JCPL.
[834] Draft letter of Jean O'Leary for the *Trial Magazine.* Gay Rights, Legal Position. n.d. 11/76-12/77 (O/A 4499) JCPL.
[835] Flippen, 2011: 224.
[836] Capitol Hill, the Newsletter of the Gay Rights National Lobby, vol. 2, no. 1, Gay) -- Homosexuals, (6/1/80-10/10/80), 06/01/1980 - 10/10/1980, Container 7. JCPL.
[837] Bitzer and Rueter, 1980: 97.

A number of test-cases pushed the discriminatory policy to its limits during Carter's presidency. For example, in *Hill v. Richmond* (1979), Gay Rights advocates challenged the right of the Public Health Service to carry out psychiatric examinations of "visiting aliens", with a view to diagnosing those who presented as homosexual as having "psychopathic personalities." Carl Hill, a British photographer, had been detained at San Francisco International Airport on suspicion of homosexuality because he was wearing a badge that read "Gay Pride."[838] Hill explained that he was going to attend the San Francisco Gay Pride parade as a journalist, but he was detained nonetheless. Following the legal case, on August 2, 1979 the United States Surgeon General issued a directive forbidding certification of this sort, on the grounds that homosexuality "is not a mental defect or disease." The very next day, two Mexican men were detained at San Francisco International Airport as suspected homosexuals because of their jewellery.[839] Overseas, however, American embassies continued to deny entrance visas to applicants suspected of being homosexual.[840] This was following a directive from the Secretary of State that visas should be denied to applicants when the consular officer had reason to believe that they might be homosexuals.[841]

Carter's Response

Carter's administration had from the beginning supported and insisted on a waiver of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) policy excluding homosexuals from entering the United States. Haft arranged a meeting on July 12, 1977 between representatives of the INS and the NGTF and another meeting in September 1977 between the NGTF and the

[838] Gay Right Advocates Memorandum to the United States Department of Justice and Acting Associate Attorney General John H Shenefield, 1980, Gay/Lesbians, (2/8/79-6/30/80), 02/08/1979 - 06/30/1980, Container 7. JCPL.
[839] Gay Rights Advocates Memorandum to the United States Department of Justice and Acting Associate Attorney General John H. Shenefield, 1980, Gay Issues, 3/4/1980, Container 29. JCPL.
[840] Gay Rights Advocates Annual Report, 1979. Gay/Lesbians, (2/8/79-6/30/80), 02/08/1979 - 06/30/1980, container 7. JCPL.
[841] Gay Rights Advocates Memorandum to the United States Department of Justice and Acting Associate Attorney General John H. Shenefield. Gay Issues, 3/4/1980, Container 29. JCPL.

PHS.[842] Despite this assistance, not everyone in Carter's administration was as supportive of the gay rights movement as Haft and Costanza. For example, Leonel Castillo, the newly appointed commissioner of the INS, and David Crosland, general counsel for the INS, were both at the White House meeting, but did not respond in favour of the lobbyists. While Costanza maintained that the meeting with Castillo and Crosland had "prompted changes in Immigration procedures,"[843] NGFT representatives did not agree with this analysis. In fact, Crosland had explained that they were simply "following the lead" of the PHS in their classification of homosexuals as sexual deviants.[844]

In response to this, the NGTF asked Julius Richmond, Surgeon General and head of the U.S. Public Health Service, to change the designation. A meeting with the NGTF, representatives from the APA, and Richmond was held on April 4, 1978. It was the third meeting in a year, arranged by Costanza, who also attended this and all the other meetings, and it led to a memo from Surgeon General Richmond to Costanza stating: "It is our feeling that the PHS should no longer be administratively responsible for certifying to the United States Visa Consular posts abroad, as well as the INS, aliens who are homosexuals without other mental abnormalities relating to their sexual orientation for exclusion under 8 U.S.C. 1182, Section 212 (a) (4)."[845] This was a huge breakthrough. The NGTF warned the INS that if it did not cease its discriminatory practices, they would seek an injunction against them. NGTF co-Executive Directors O'Leary and Voeller said after the meeting, "We believe that this far-reaching policy change will go a long way toward ending this country's exclusion of gay visitors and immigrants. We are also hopeful that any remaining problems can be resolved, since INS General Counsel David Crosland has agreed to personally serve as liaison

[842] Memorandum of Marilyn Haft to Margaret Costanza, 31 June 1977, "1/20/77-1/20/81," Box FG-114, WHCF. JCPL.
[843] Letter from Midge Costanza to R. W. Sohns, 27 March 1978, "1/1/78-6/30/78," Box HU-8, WHCF. JCPL.
[844] NGTF Position Memorandum on Immigration Policy Regarding Homosexuals," 11 July 1979. Robert Malson files, Gay Rights, Box 7, Civil Rights/Domestic Policy Staff. JCPL.
[845] Memo from Surgeon General Richmond to Midge Costanza. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

between his agency and NGTF, and has encouraged us to bring any complaints by gay aliens or prospective immigrants directly to his attention."[846]

The NGTF actively petitioned Carter on this issue throughout his presidency and so did conservative groups, including the United States Catholic Conference, at one with the right wing evangelicals on this issue. In 1978, the Catholic Conference wrote to Carter expressing their concern about possible liberalisation of the issue, receiving in response merely a form letter acknowledging their missive and stating that it would be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities.[847]

Meanwhile, the NGTF continued to push for movement, supported by bodies including Washington's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. A letter from the Bureau signed by Associate Attorney General John Shenefield reminded Carter that the United States had signed up to the Helsinki Final Act. This obliged the signatories to permit the free movement of people, institutions and organisations. However, by prohibiting the entry of homosexuals, the US was not living up to its pledge, despite criticising other nations when they ignored theirs. Attempting to put pressure on Carter, the NGTF asked him to "take charge of this situation" and to instruct the INS to "take a permanent and formal position that lesbians and gays are no longer excludable."[848]

The Carter administration held many meetings with the NGTF to discuss this matter, and believed that the process was working well.[849] On August 2, 1979, Carter announced that his government's new policy would no longer exclude homosexuals from entering the United

[846] NGTF Press Release, 6 April 1978, "NGTF Wins Public Health Service Policy Change- Will affect U.S. Immigration Practices. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 72. CU.
[847] Letter from Landon Kite, Staff Assistant, to the Reverend Thomas C. Kelly, 20 July 1978, Gay Rights: Correspondence 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978. JCPL.
[848] Letter from Lucia Valeska to Benjamin Civiletti, 31 August 1979. Folder Gay Rights, Box 7, Robert Malson Files. JCPL.
[849] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.

States on grounds that homosexuality was "a disease or mental defect."[850] The decision followed an announcement by the U.S. Surgeon General, Julius B. Richmond, that the Public Health Service, in line with widespread current thinking, did not consider homosexuality to be a mental disease or defect, and further did not believe that it could be determined by medical diagnosis.[851]

Addressing remaining issues, the Attorney General Alan A. Parker wrote to Senator Alan Cranston to clarify the views of the Department of Justice. These were that, from a legal standpoint, either the law should be rewritten to reflect the language of the American Psychiatric Association, which did not believe homosexuality to be a disorder, or to make it clear that the relevant clause explicitly referred to the desire to exclude homosexuals from entering the United States on the grounds of sexuality.[852]

While Carter's administration was against excluding travellers or migrants on the grounds of their sexuality, in practice, immigration officials were often markedly less inclined to view homosexual immigrants kindly. In fact, as late as August 1979, people were still being turned away for being suspected homosexuals and lesbians. On November 22, 1979, Ulrike Delling, a German, wrote a letter of complaint to Norman Alt of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, complaining that she had been stopped and harassed on attempting to enter the US at the Canadian border to attend a music festival. She had been asked detailed questions about her sexual preferences and threatened with jail pending a trial should she insist on entering the United States. In the event, she turned back.[853]

In December 1979, the Justice Department torpedoed Carter's "no exclusion" order by declaring that the ban on foreign homosexuals was enacted by Congress in 1952 and

[850] Letter from Attorney General Alan A. Parker to Senator Alan Cranston, 1980 (no date), Gay/Lesbians, (2/8/79-6/30/80), 02/08/1979 - 06/30/1980. JCPL.
[851] *The Associated Press*, 27 December 1979, "Immigration Service to Exclude Gay Foreigners."
[852] Letter from Attorney General Alan A. Parker to Senator Alan Cranston, 1980 (no date), Gay/Lesbians, (2/8/79-6/30/80), 02/08/1979 - 06/30/1980. JCPL.
[853] Letter from Ulrike Delling to Norman Alt, 22 November, 1979. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 8, CU.

upheld by the Supreme Court in 1967. The Department sent a memo to the INS stating that it was "statutorily required" to enforce the ban. Carter responded by setting up a Select Committee to review immigration laws. The committee held hearings in Boston, to which NGTF members were invited, to discuss topics such as the effects of a ban on foreign homosexuals seeking to enter the United States. Carter assured the committee that its proposed recommendations would be reviewed by him and by Congress.[854] At the same time, at the behest of the White House, regular meetings took place involving the Justice Department, the INS and NGTF to discuss immigration policies and enforcement procedures."[855]

Moreover, problems arose in regard to would-be refugees who were fleeing a regime considered by the US to be abusive (such as Cuba and other Communist states) and who happened to be homosexual. For example, between April 15, 1980 and October 31, 1980, many Cuban refugees, including some homosexuals, had been allowed by Cuba to flee to the United States. This was known as the Mariel boatlift, named for Mariel Harbour in Cuba from which the fleet departed.[856] This created tension in the United States and led to situations whereby some gay refugees were badly treated, both in Florida and by other refugees. Though homosexuality was not illegal per se in Cuba, it was considered shameful. Bill Traugh, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said that even among the refugees of the Mariel boatlift, "the homosexual group is shunned by the general population. Many of the Cuban men are very macho and don't take too kindly to the homosexuals."[857]

[854] Pear (*The New York Times*), 24 June 1980: 13, "Administration Opposing Ban on Homosexuals."
[855] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[856] Lanham, 1997.
[857] Brown (*The Washington Post*), 7 July 1980: 1, "Cuban Boatlift Drew Thousands of Homosexuals."

On May 2, 1980, the *Sentinel* reported that the Carter administration had given special waivers, on humanitarian grounds, to Cuban refugees of the Mariel boatlift, to ensure their safe entry to the United States.[858] This was despite the fact that some of the refugees were homosexuals. The government ruling stated that the Refugee Act did not permit the so-called Marielitos to be considered refugees, but that each case would be considered on its own merits. With his administration under considerable pressure to allow the refugees into the USA, Carter publicly welcomed them. On June 20, Cubans (and Haitians) who had come to the US during the period of the Mariel boatlift were given a special classification that granted them entry.[859] The *Gay Community News* reported that the Mariel boatlift offered grounds for a federal exception.[860]

In late June, Carter's government stated that it would support a bill put forward by Senator Cranston that would allow homosexual foreigners to enter the United States without restriction. Cranston referred to a list of conditions under the present 25-year-old law which barred persons from entering the United States. He said his legislation would remove the words "sexual deviation" from the list. [861]

Wexler commented in a letter dated June 18, 1980 to several gay groups involved in the immigration issue, that the reversal of position stemmed from "the President's human rights policies and the nation's responsibilities to be consistent with our immigration expectation of other countries."[862] Wexler's letter was accompanied by a copy of another letter by Assistant Attorney General Parker, who offered several technical changes in the bill

[858] Bush (*The Sentinel*), 2 May 1980: 1. 'Gay Cubans Win Waiver.' NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[859] Message written by David Crosland, INS, 9 August 1980. Folder: Homosexuals, Box 22, Records of the Cuban-Haitian Task Force. JCPL.
[860] *Gay Community News, 5* July 1980: 1. (Gay) Civil Rights 10/76-2/78 (O/A 4609), 10/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
[861] Chibbaro (*The Blade*), 26 June 1980: A3, "White House Supports Immigration Law Change."
[862] *Gay Community News, 5* July 1980: 1. (Gay) Civil Rights 10/76-2/78 (O/A 4609), 10/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.

but stated, "The Department of Justice supports the objective of S. 2210 (the Cranston bill)."[863] Cranston's bill was not strongly supported, and failed not long afterwards.[864]

Because of the delay caused by Cranston's bill and unable to do anything else, Carter, in August 1980, issued another directive concerning immigration policy. A new questionnaire given to immigrants did not contain a question about whether they were homosexual and the directive stated that officials were not allowed to question immigrants about their sexual preferences or to infer the same from their appearance or other factors. Homosexuals continued to be classed officially as undesirables and could technically still be excluded, but Carter's directive meant that they could only be questioned about their homosexuality if they made a voluntary, unambiguous statement about it.[865]

On September 9, 1980, the Justice Department stated that it was legally obliged to prevent homosexuals from entering the United States, but that it would do so only if the alien stated that he or she was homosexual, practically accepting Carter's new directive.[866] Therefore, with Carter's approval, the Department instructed the INS not to ask about homosexuality. The new policy would only ban homosexuals if they had made an unambiguous statement about their sexuality, orally or in writing. Authorities could no longer draw inferences from mannerisms, style of dress, or possession of items such as a gay pride badge or literature about gay rights. If a third party stated that a particular individual was homosexual, however, the INS would have a warrant to ask them if this was the case.[867] The INS noted that, "the likelihood of a third-party stating that an alien is homosexual is

[863] Chibbaro (*The Blade*), 26 June 1980: A3, "White House Supports Immigration Law Change."
[864] Turner, 1995: 217-19.
[865] Questionnaire and information sheet from the NGTF and Lambda Legal Defence and Education Fund to attendees of the We Want the Music Collective, Michigan, 1981. NGTF records, Box 144, Folder 8, CU.
[866] Letter from the Department of Justice, 9 September 1980, Folder: Homosexuals, Box 22, Records of the Cuban-Haitian Task Force. JCPL.
[867] Telegraphic Message from David Crossland, Acting Commissioner of the INS, 9/8/1980, Folder: Homosexuals, Box 22, Records of the Cuban-Haitian Task Force. JCPL.

remote."[868] However, the NGTF was not entirely happy, mostly because of the delays with Cranston's bill, so in the beginning of October, 1980, it wrote in its Newsletter that "we had anticipated that the matter would have been resolved by this date…" and offered its assistance in "expediting the formulation of Justice Department Policy."[869]

Carter's efforts to end the exclusion of homosexuals from entering the United States cannot be disputed. His administration met several times with the NGTF over the issue while also facilitating many meetings with the relevant Federal agencies. Knowing that it would have been impossible for Congress to pass legislation to remove this exclusion, as was also the case with Cranston's bill, Carter issued a directive which effectively removed the exclusion of homosexuals from entering the USA. Although legally, homosexuals were still not allowed in the USA, the new directive prohibited the immigration authorities from questioning visitors about their sexuality or even making assumptions about it. David Mack Henderson told the author, "frankly, the ban on homosexuals entering America was an embarrassment. It was not something that other developed Western nations generally did. Especially the idea that the authorities could look at someone and decide he could enter because they thought he looked gay or whatever. Aside from the flagrant breaching of gay rights, it made America look ridiculous. We were all relieved when Carter took steps to deal with this situation."[870]

THE MILITARY

The treatment of homosexuals by the US military was deeply discriminatory and one of the major issues for gay activists in the 1970s. Because homosexuals were not considered fit for military service, anyone in the military who was discovered to be homosexual received a

[868] Telegraphic Message from David Crossland, Acting Commissioner of the INS, 9/8/1980, Folder: Homosexuals, Box 22, Records of the Cuban-Haitian Task Force. JCPL.
[869] Letter from the NGTF, 3 October 1980. NGTF, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980. JCPL.
[870] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.

dishonourable discharge. As well as the insult implicit in the terminology used, there were serious repercussions for their future employment and financial stability, pension rights, and so forth. Clearly, there were many practical reasons for gay rights organisations to wish to support homosexuals serving in the military.

Another important reason why the military issue mattered so much to the gay rights movement lies in its huge symbolic role as a factor of US identity. The United States military was popularly seen as a force for good in the world, and a symbol of American masculinity at its best. In this context, the rejection of homosexuals from its ranks was not just an infringement of their personal rights, but a rejection of the very idea that a homosexual could even *be* a "true" American, capable of serving his country with honour. Thus, for both practical and symbolic reasons, the plight of gays in the military was an important issue for gay rights activists both during and after Carter's presidency. Louie Crew, member of the board of directors of the NGTF at the time, confirmed in an interview that the military situation was "one of the most important issues" for the NGTF at the time.[871]

Carter was initially confronted with the issue of homosexuals in the military during his presidential campaign in 1976 when he was interviewed by Tom Snyder for "*The Tomorrow Sho*w." He said that he supported an end to harassment, abuse and discrimination against homosexuals, a stance that was consistent with his view on the right of homosexuals not to be harassed in general. Snyder asked specifically about Leonard Matlovich, an army sergeant who had been "drummed out" of the military with a dishonourable discharge in 1975 because he was homosexual, despite having an exemplary record. Carter expressed personal sympathy for Matlovich. However, he stated his opinion that homosexuals in sensitive positions would be liable to blackmail, and that even overt homosexuals could implicate a sexual partner whose sexual orientation might not be public knowledge. When Snyder

[871] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.

commented that the same could apply to unsanctioned heterosexual behaviour, Carter agreed, but reiterated his stance that homosexuals would be more vulnerable in this regard.[872] Matlovich appealed his dismissal in 1976 and his case became a rallying point for the gay rights movement. After a series of legal battles, he would eventually win his appeal in the U.S. District Court in 1980 with the Judge ordering that Matlovich be "promptly reinstated."[873]

Bob Martin, who had graduated from university in 1970, and who had been the founder of the Student Homophile League in Columbia University, joined the navy and served for one year as a radioman on a NATO base in Italy. He was given a dishonourable discharge because he was a homosexual. Whereas most soldiers discharged dishonourably for this reason stayed quiet, Martin fought back and demanded a court martial, arguing that his constitutional rights were being flouted and that men who "passed" as heterosexual, but actually were homosexuals, were left alone.[874]

Martin applied for an Honourable Discharge and gay rights activists Frank Kameny and Foster Gunnison took up his cause.[875] They set up a fund, and started advising Martin on how to reach out for political support.[876] Martin sent press releases to the TV networks, and to a wide range of newspapers and magazines, and was given public declarations of support from a range of bodies, including the American Psychiatric Association, Tom Hayden and six US Congressional Representatives, including Ed Koch and Bella Abzug. Abzug referred to the case as a "witch hunt" and demanded that the Secretary of the Navy, John Chafee,

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[872] Transcript of Jimmy Carter interview with Tom Snyder on the *Tomorrow Show* on NBC, 19 March 1976. Gay Rights. 10/76 O/A 5772. JCPL.
[873] Pichirallo (The Washington Post), 25 November 1980: A1, "Air Force Will Pay Matlovich $160,000 to Settle Gay Suit"; Smith (*The Associated Press*), 11 September 1980, "Air Force to Appeal Order Reinstating Homosexual Sergeant."
[874] *The Advocate*, 24 May 1972. "Pentagon Holds to Anti-gay Stand." NGTF records, Box 31, Folder 14, CU.
[875] Gay Vet Wins Honourable Discharge, October 1979. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.
[876] *The Advocate,* 16 February 1972. "Major Test Being Sought on Navy Homosexuality." NGTF records, Box 31, Folder 14, CU.

intervene.[877] Martin lost his fight, and his dishonourable discharge was confirmed in June 1972.[878]

Carter's Response

In March 1977, just three months after moving into the White House, Carter announced the establishment of the President's Special Discharge Review Program to review all dishonourable discharges, including those of homosexuals, signalling his intention to intervene when an injustice was thought to have had taken place. Carter's administration specifically confirmed that homosexuals who were discharged from the Armed Forces since 1958 because of their homosexuality would qualify for an "upgrade" in those discharges. Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army Paul Phillips said that "individuals separated from the Armed Forces on the basis of their homosexuality may qualify for upgrading within the President's Special Discharge Review Program."[879]

Carter's program reviewed about 400,000 less-than-honourable discharges, including many extended to homosexuals, who were consequently disqualified from G.I. benefits and often discriminated against in the job market. However the process was slow and by the end of his Presidency, fewer than 14,000 discharges were upgraded.[880]

One of them was Bob Martin's, which was upgraded from "dishonourable" to "honourable."[881] This was the first time that the discharge of a homosexual soldier had been upgraded, and a historic breakthrough for gay rights in the United States. The gay rights

[877] *The Advocate*, 12 April 1972. "Sam Ervin Intervention Seaman Due General Discharge to Undergo Psychiatric Test." NGTF records, Box 31, Folder 14, CU.
[878] Gay Vet Wins Honourable Discharge, October 1979. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.
[879] Press release from the Office of Assistance Secretary of Defence, 8 February 1978, "Department of Army to Upgrade General Discharges for Personality Disorders." NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 48. CU; *Gay Community News*, 2 July 1977: 3, "US Confirms: Gays Can Get Discharges Upgraded." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[880] Berg (*The New York Times*), 23 November 1980: 21, "The Carter Promise."
[881] Gay Vet Wins Honourable Discharge, October 1979. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.

movement hailed it as a "useful precedent."[882] The official letter Martin received on April 7, 1977 highlighted the practical implications of the honourable discharge for him when it pointed out that he could use this new discharge in applying for any benefits that related to his time in the service.[883] However, the symbolic import of the move was considerably greater than any difference the upgraded discharge would make to Martin's pension rights.

Martin was quoted as saying: "What an honourable discharge means to me is that it is the nation's way of saying that it is proud of gay veterans and by extension that it is proud of millions of gay veterans and current service people. We've come a long way … if my service to the Navy and the country can now be characterized as Honourable, then there is no rationale for the services to deny Honourable Discharges to men and women being discharged today for 'homosexual involvement.' Ultimately, of course, the whole discharge policy will have to be revoked. I hope that the Carter people in the White House will see to it that this is done soon, but I suspect Anita [Bryant] is on their minds."[884]

Gay rights activists rallied in an effort to make Martin's case the precedent they hoped it could be, especially since gay discharges were included in Carter's special review programme at White House insistence.[885] Martin's case led to the reversal of several dishonourable discharges and, indeed, set a precedent for future discharges.[886] It was therefore a matter of great importance to homosexuals. Tom Hayden, who had actively supported Bob Martin, told the author that Carter "deserves credit" for the review programme, which he described as "a marker" in the evolution of gay rights.[887]

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[882] Gay Vet Wins Honourable Discharge, October 1979. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.
[883] Letter from the Department of the Navy to Robert Martin, 26 September 1977. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.
[884] Gay Vet Wins Honourable Discharge, October 1979. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.
[885] Gay Vet Wins Honourable Discharge, October 1979. Foster Gunnison, Jr. Papers, undated, 1945-1994. University of Connecticut.
[886] *Gay Week*, 17 October, 1977. Gay Issues. 5/77 (O/A 4479), 05/1977 - 05/1977. JCPL.
[887] Tom Hayden in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.

Donald Hallman, who was dishonourably discharged from the Army in the 1950s for being gay, said about Carter's efforts in a personal interview, "the US army is very important in the minds of most Americans, and that soldiers and veterans might be gay was not something that was ever publicly discussed. Society did not believe, or did not want to believe, that there were gay soldiers in the Army. What Carter did was to render visible a body of Americans who hitherto were unseen and ignored." Hallman said that was a very brave thing to do. "Carter's ground-breaking initiatives on behalf of gays in the military were massively important, not only in according respect to such servicemen and women, but in changing the attitude of the wider public."[888]

Eddie Sandifer told the author, "during my service, a dishonourable discharge threatened every gay solder; it was something all feared. The military issue would run and run for years, but the changes that came under Carter did make a huge difference to people, preventing God knows how many gay veterans from living in poverty. Symbolically, the difference was huge. A dishonourable discharge is a disgrace. It's no exaggeration to say that removing this penalty probably saved the lives of hundreds of gay veterans who might otherwise have been tempted to commit suicide. We have moved on since then and Carter deserves much of the credit. Although it might be forgotten today, I think every gay solider at the time was very grateful to President Carter for his efforts."[889]

The significance of Bob Martin's case, and its outcome, was not necessarily registered by the public at large. This was possibly Carter's preferred result, as at the time he was continuing to juggle the competing demands of progressive groups such as gay rights activists, and the extreme right wing, represented above all by the evangelical right. In this

[888] Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.
[889] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview 26 February 2016.

context, drawing attention to a decision that would have been seen as deeply controversial would not have been wise.

Carter's Other Contributions to the Military Issue

As a result of Carter's interventions, the Department of Defence ceased declaring gay bars near military bases to be off-limits and stopped giving homosexual soldiers dishonourable discharges.[890] Then, three months before the 1980 presidential elections, and at a time when Carter was under increasing pressure from the evangelical right, the Gay Activists Alliance asked the military authorities to allow homosexual veterans to take part in an official wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Initially, the request was refused, but then the White House intervened and it was granted,[891] much to the horror of evangelical Christians.[892]

Kameny was the man responsible for securing the reversal and ensuring that for the first time in history gay people placed a wreath at the Tomb. Several dozen gay activists took their place there alongside three high-ranking military officers. Kameny later explained that when he first heard that the Gay Activists Alliance's request had been refused, a decision he described as "an obscenity," he was so angry he was willing to be arrested or shot by a sentry in order to lay a wreath. On consideration, he called the White House liaison officer, Allison Thomas, who called the responsible Army person "to make sure the gay group's rights were being upheld," and the request was immediately upheld.[893]

Evangelical Reaction to Carter's Military Policies

[890] Flippen, 2011: 169.
[891] Chibbaro Jr. (*Blade*), 12 June 1980: 1, "Carter Backs Off Immigration Bill."
[892] D. Michael Lindsay, in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.
[893] Meyers (*The Washington Post*), 29 May 1980: 27, "Gays Pay Honor to War Dead at Arlington Tomb."

The evangelical right and other conservative Christians were already upset with Carter's military policy because they thought it weakened national defence.[894] The Special Discharge Review Program and the decision to allow gays to lay a wreath were seen as a desecration of something held in the highest esteem by Americans, the US Army. Rev. W.A. Criswell, pastor of the 20,000-member First Baptist Church of Dallas, said, "When a woman who is accused of lesbianism is given an honourable discharge (from the Navy), something should be said. In days when teachers look and smell worse than those they are teaching, something should be said. When we are told it's time to get rid of unemployment and then they double it, something should be said."[895] Falwell used his huge direct mailing list to warn that, "we are losing the war against homosexuals," saying "… gays were recently given permission to lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery to honour any sexual deviants who served in the military. That's right – the gays were allowed to turn our Tomb of the Unknown Soldier into THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SODOMITE!"[896] In addition, Carter received numerous complaints passed on by several conservative congressmen about the same issue.[897]

The Sequel

The battle for gay rights in the military continued for years after Carter's presidency and even the most liberal presidents who succeeded him struggled to reconcile the competing views of gay rights activists and other liberals, and of the evangelical right and other right wing activists. This struggle is epitomised by Clinton's "Don't ask, don't tell," approach, which satisfied nobody and did nothing to further the cause of gay rights. In this light, the decision under Carter to permit the honourable discharges of homosexual soldiers, and to allow a

[894] *The Associated Press*, 9 October 1980, "Carter Aide Assails Moral Majority."
[895] Herbaugh (*The Associated Press*), 22 August 1980, "Christians Urged to Get Involved in Politics."
[896] Martin, 1996: 205.
[897] Chibbaro Jr. (*Blade*), 12 June 1980: 1, "Carter Backs Off Immigration Bill."

group of homosexual soldiers to engage in a public act of memorialisation in an important civic space, should be seen as important steps towards the acceptance of homosexuality in the military.

Denny Meyer, Public Affairs Officer for the American Veterans for Equal Rights, said of Carter's efforts in a personal interview, that "all of these early actions were extremely important in setting the stage for our rights, for awareness, for the fact that Gay Lives Matter, just as recent tragedies have demonstrated."[898] David Mack Henderson also told the author that the reversal of Martin's discharge and Carter's review programme with regard to discharges were "extremely important for the gay soldiers."[899]

It is important to mention that some gay leaders active at the time told the author that they were not then aware of any actions by Carter in support of gay veterans and expressed surprise when told about them.[900] Even stranger perhaps is that Carter's own administration did not include his efforts in a letter to the NGTF in early 1980 regarding his achievements in the area of gay rights (this issue is discussed in chapter Eight).[901]

[898] Danny Meyer in a personal interview, 19 June 2016.
[899] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[900] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014; Craig Howell in a personal interview, 19 March 2016; Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016.
[901] Letter from Robert Strauss, chairman of the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.

HOMOSEXUAL PRISONERS

Another major issue for gay rights activists at a time of growing mobilisation around all issues relating to civil rights was that of homosexual prisoners. One of the issues that apparently muddied the waters in terms of how homosexual prisoners were viewed within the prison system was the fact that assaults against them, up to and including rape, were often reported as "homosexual rape" – giving the impression that the assailant, rather than the victim, was homosexual when in fact in general assailants were identified as primarily heterosexuals.[902]

A series of letters about a prisoner named Jon Wildes, who was serving time at McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary, Washington State, highlight the fact that concerns about the situation facing gay prisoners were based on very real issues. On November 29, 1976, Philip Crane of the House of Representatives wrote to Charles Williams from Illinois, who was petitioning for Wilde's transfer to an institution where he would be safer. He responded that a Warden of McNeil Prison named Putnam felt that "the situation has been taken care of and there is no need for any further special measures... the officials are doing all they can to assist Mr Wildes and will continue to do so. They are not aware of any immediate danger or personal safety issues."[903]

By February 4, of the following year, Crane was addressing Williams as "Charlie" and writing in a more casual tone, albeit still with bad news. He pointed out that Congressional correspondence was often construed by government agencies as "interfering" and was supportive of Williams's decision to secure legal counsel, while also determining that his own involvement with the case was over as "further efforts would prove futile."

[902] NGTF Monthly Newsletter, "NGTF Meets with Bureau of Prisons Director." May 1978. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70. CU.
[903] Letter from Philip Crane to Charles Williams, 29 November 1976, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.

Crane even voiced his concern that his interventions might have been detrimental to the case of Wildes.[904]

As of February 22, 1977, Wildes had had to be placed in solitary confinement for his own protection,[905] and four weeks later the NGTF, which had been contacted by Williams in a desperate plea for their intervention with Wildes' case,[906] wrote to Richard Lindsey, Warden Putnam's assistant, to state that, "we are deeply concerned for the welfare of Jon Wildes if he is taken out of segregation pending his appeal… on the basis of information we have been given we fear such action could be tantamount to murder."[907] Williams and the NGTF had reason to be concerned; Williams had received correspondence from Wildes claiming that the prison staff were setting him up to be killed and that they were trying to coerce him into writing a note stating that he wished to be returned to the general population so that they would not be responsible for his eventual death.[908]

Shortly after this flurry of correspondence, one of Wildes's fellow inmates, Tom Colvin, was stabbed in the prison auditorium, dying three hours later. It was the second murder of a homosexual in the prison, the first victim being Glenn Levine, and in each case the prison authorities had known about the death threats that had been made against them. Their response had been to coerce the two men into signing a "release of responsibility" statement. "In effect," wrote Sheldon Haight of the Board of Institutional Ministry, "this released the prison authorities from being responsible for whatever happened to the prisoners, who were in their legal custody. It did not ensure [their] safety, nor it did afford them any

[904] Letter from Philip Crane to Charles Williams, 4 February 1977, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[905] Letter from Johnson and Kelley, Attorneys at Law, to the Bureau of Prisons, Western Region, 22 February 1977, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[906] Letter from Charles Williams to the NGTF, 17 March 1977, (National Gay Task Force Correspondence) 9/76-2/78 (O/A 4499), 09/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
[907] Mailgram from the NGTF to Richard Lindsey, 18 March 1977, (National Gay Task Force Correspondence) 9/76-2/78 (O/A 4499), 09/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
[908] Letter from Jon Wildes to Charles Williams, 12 March, 1977, (National Gay Task Force Correspondence) 9/76-2/78 (O/A 4499), 09/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.

guaranteed protective measures, but merely allowed [them] to sign their own death certificates in advance."[909]

Johnny Gibbs, another homosexual prisoner, provided a picture of the situation facing gay prisoners in the *DC Times* in May 1977. Together with a number of other prisoners, Gibbs had founded the National Gay Prisoners' Coalition in 1972 to rally support for gay prisoners, who regularly suffered harassment from both prison employees and other detainees.[910] Gay prisoners' lives were at direct risk from people with an anti-gay agenda, and there had already been cases of prisoners who had died because of their sexual orientation. In one, a homosexual prisoner was attacked by a fellow detainee, and subsequently, "The prison guards were conspicuously absent, and they responded with an intentional slowness that resulted in Valenzuela's death." Violence, including the sexual assault of homosexual prisoners, was rife, with the suggestion that "rape seems to be used as a maintenance tool by the system against those who get out of line."[911]

Less dramatic infringements of rights included the fact that, while heterosexual prisoners were allowed to access a wide range of publications, including erotica, gay prisoners were routinely denied the right to read gay magazines of any kind, including political publications with no sexual content, because prison directors believed them to be "detrimental to the safety, security, and orderly running of an institution."[912] Correspondence between a homosexual prisoner in Leavenworth, Kansas, Calvin Keach, and Clair Cripe, reveals the situation facing homosexual prisoners. Responding to Keach's request for access to publications covering homosexual themes, following the rejection of his application to receive them by the prison warden, C.L Benson, Cripe explains that "possession of such

[909] Press Release from Sheldon M. Haight, Area Rep. Board of Institutional Ministry, Seattle, Washington, 25 April 1977. Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[910] *DC Times*, 4 May 1977, (Gay) Civil Rights 10/76-2/78 (O/A 4609), 10/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
[911] Gays in Prison Position Paper, Metropolitan Community Church. National Gay Task Force: Prisons (Carlson Case) 7/77-3/78 (O/A 4499) (1), 07/1977 - 03/1978. JCPL.
[912] *DC Times*, 4 May 1977, (Gay) Civil Rights 10/76-2/78 (O/A 4609), 10/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.

publications identifies one as a homosexual, thus subjecting him to the sexual advances of other inmates."[913]

This official position blamed sexual assault within prisons on the victim rather than the assailant. The implication is that the homosexual prisoner would be at fault for revealing his preferences rather than remaining quietly "in the closet." Keach's request to receive a visit from a minister of the Metropolitan Community Church was also rejected on the grounds that Keach and the minister in question had never actually met, while there were already full-time chaplains in the prison who could easily attend to his spiritual needs (notwithstanding the likelihood that many of these chaplains would consider homosexuality to be a sin and would be unsympathetic or even hostile to homosexual prisoners). In short, there was no concept of homosexual prisoners as a minority that warranted any special attention.

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches wrote to the NGTF on February 9, 1977, stating their support for the NGTF's campaign to grant prisoners access to gay literature.[914] On March 17, 1977, Calvin Keach of the Fellowship wrote to Bruce Voeller about a meeting they had scheduled at the White House to discuss the issue of allowing gay prisoners access to materials written for a gay readership. Keach stressed the importance of the literature in assisting gay prisoners in identifying with their community, and wished Voeller luck in the meeting.[915]

Another matter of concern was that gay prisoners were denied access to ministers from the gay-friendly Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, while

[913] Letter from Clair A Cripe to Calvin Keach, 22 December 1976, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[914] Letter from the Administrative Assistant of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to the NGTF, 9 February 1977, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[915] Letter from Calvin Keach to Bruce Voeller, 17 March 1977, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.

other prisoners had access to spiritual counsel and support. Prison authorities cited as an argument against access to gay literature and to a supportive ministry "that it would tend to identify and open to attack the homosexual prisoner, and cause disruption in the prison procedures."[916] When members of Troy Perry's Metropolitan Community Church started visiting gay inmates imprisoned in California the prison officials banned them on the grounds that their visits identified homosexuals and made them vulnerable to violence. The Church quickly filed suit again, and the authority's lawyers defended the prison on the basis that the prisoners were covered under the eighth amendment, which stated that they should be free of "cruel and unusual punishment," and that sexual assault fell into this category.[917]

Things for homosexual women detainees were no better. They faced similar dangers from other prisoners, although to a lesser extent, and were also denied access to homosexual publications and to gay-friendly clerics. There was also concerned that some of them in LA County were held in a so-called "Daddy Tank," a maximum security area with particularly tough conditions.[918]

Carter's Response

The situation facing gay prisoners improved considerably under the Carter regime, mostly because of Costanza's efforts. In May 1977, a homosexual prisoner, four publishers and the NGTF sued Norman A. Carlson, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, because he forbade inmates from accessing gay publications. The lawsuit coincided with the launch of the NGTF's prison project.[919] Carlson defended his position, claiming in the U.S. District

[916] Gays in Prison Position Paper, Metropolitan Community Church. National Gay Task Force: Prisons (Carlson Case), 9 February 1977, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[917] Memo of Frank Carlson to Norman White, 26 December 1979. Folder Gays, Box 8. JCPL.
[918] *Lesbian Tide*, 16 March, 1977, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978. JCPL.
[919] It's Time: The Newsletter of the NGTF, 1 May 1978: 4, "NGTF Meets with Bureau of Prisons Director." Box 36, Folder 70. CU.

Court that "publications which call attention to or identify inmates who accept homosexuality can, in our opinion, be detrimental to their safety as well as to the safety of others."[920]

In April 1978, Costanza, Voeller and O'Leary met with Carlson, and explained their position.[921] As a result of this meeting, Carlson changed his attitude and became very cooperative and helpful. On April 10, 1978, he wrote to the NGTF, thanking them for meeting with him and stated that he "looked forward" to having a positive relationship with them. He enclosed a policy document that stated that prison staff should refer to incidents of assault and rape without prefixing them with the term "homosexual"[922] In other actions, Carlson nominated his assistant, Peggy Frandsen, as the federal prison liaison link with the gay community. He also organised sensitivity sessions for prison staff on gay issues.[923] Moreover, with the White House's intervention the Bureau of Prisons began permitting non-pornographic material of particular interest to homosexuals to be distributed to prisoners,[924] while gay ministers were allowed to visit prisons and provide pastoral care to homosexual prisoners.[925] As result of all this, the NGTF established a Prison Project to evaluate and deal with the progress with the Bureau of Prisons and address further issues of homosexual prisoners.[926]

As for the power and influence held by Costanza as Assistant to the President for Public Liaison and her contribution to the changes for gay prisoners, this is demonstrated by the following incident: Before one meeting of the Bureau of Prisons to discuss the issue of

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[920] *The Washington Post*, 14 May 1977: 3, "Prisoner Fights Homosexual Magazine Ban."
[921] NGTF Monthly Newsletter, "NGTF Meets with Bureau of Prisons Director," May 1978. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70. CU.
[922] NGTF 7301 Prison project 1977-1978, correspondence between Bruce Voeller and Jean O'Leary and Norman A Carlson, n.d. Box 36, Folder 70. NGTF records. CU; News from NGTF, 19 April 1978, "Prison Rapes No longer Labelled "Homosexual Assault." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70. CU.
[923] NGTF Press release. 19 April 1978. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 74. CU.
[924] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[925] Memorandum for Anne Wexler from Allison Thomas re. a meeting with Larry Bush, freelance reporter for gay media, 15 April 1980, Anne Wexler's Subject Files, Gay Issues, Container 105. JCPL.
[926] News from NGTF, 22 March 1978, "NGTF Holds Meeting with Bureau of Prisons." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70. CU.

homosexual prisoners, Norman Carlson informed Haft that he would not attend. Costanza informed him that she would be there, whereupon Carlson changed his plans. Recalling the episode in 1980, Costanza said "He would not have been in that room if I had not personally said that I was going to be there… You understand that in almost every single instance, as long as I was there, the head of that department was there. That's the power of the White House."[927]

TAXATION

A major practical issue for gay rights organisations was that of tax exemption. According to US tax law, certain organisations – such as churches and charitable groups – were exempt from a range of taxes, granting them considerable access to funds. In the 1970s, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) had a contentious relationship with a range of faith organisations, having threatened to revoke the tax exemption of private schools unless they met state-mandated standards for racial integration[928] set following the 1964 Civil Rights Act pushed through Congress by Lyndon B. Johnson.[929] This meant that right wing evangelicals, who tended to send their children to such schools, along with other faith groups including Catholics and Jews, were primed to feel resentful and attack any suggestion that organisations they considered immoral, such as gay rights groups, should benefit from tax exemption.

At first, gay rights organisations were not considered eligible, but then the Internal Revenue started to grant tax exempt status to some gay rights groups, such as the Pride Foundation, which was granted exemption in 1975, the second time it applied.[930] However

[927] Mattingly and Boyd, 2013: 369.
[928] Martin, 1996: 169-73.
[929] Balmer, 2008: 95.
[930] William B. Kelley, The Internal Revenue Service and Income Tax Exemption for Gay Organizations, Material for NGFT meeting with Margaret Costanza, n.d. 1977. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 25, CU.

this was done only for organizations who declared that homosexuality is "a sickness, disturbance, or diseased pathology."[931]

In addition, many of the approximately 1,700 such organisations did not apply,[932] presumably because they were so used to operating on the margins of society they did not think they would be considered. If that is what they assumed, they had a point; those that did apply, and were granted exemption, typically reported substantial delays with their cases, and they all had the general perception that the IRS had little interest in following them up. William Kelley (long-term gay rights activist and successful lobbyist for change in anti-gay legislation in Illinois) also claimed that applications were often marred by errors on the part of the IRS and that "the policy seems to be that homosexuality is against public policy, and its advocacy even on a par with homosexuality, as well as activities which allegedly foster it, are disqualifying in the Service's view."[933] For example, in 1975, the Lambda Service Bureau, a gay rights organisation, had been informed that it was having its exemption status revoked because it had stated that it would advocate that homosexuality was "normal" and that this attitude "carries a serious risk of encouraging or fostering homosexual attitudes and propensities among minors and other impressionable members of society."[934] By August 1976, the Lambda Service Bureau was writing to the IRS with a palpable sense of frustration, claiming that the IRS was singling it out for harassment.[935]

Prior to the meeting between the NGTF and Costanza in March 1977, the NGTF received letters from a number of gay rights organisations about their tax situation, including one from Jaime Green of the Gay Community Services Centre in Los Angeles, in which he

[931] News from NGTF. "Fund for Human Dignity Receives Tax-Deductible Status." 9 August 1977. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 44. CU.
[932] William B. Kelley, The Internal Revenue Service and Income Tax Exemption for Gay Organizations, Material for NGFT meeting with Margaret Costanza, n.d. 1977. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 25, CU.
[933] William B. Kelley, The Internal Revenue Service and Income Tax Exemption for Gay Organizations, Material for NGFT meeting with Margaret Costanza, n.d. 1977. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 25. CU.
[934] Inland Revenue Service to Lambda Service Bureau, 25 March, 1975. NGTF records, Box 144, folder 25, CU.
[935] Lambda Service Bureau to the IRS, 7 August 1976. NGTF records, Box 144, folder 25, CU.

asked them to raise the matter of gay rights organisations being asked by the IRS to drop the word "gay" from their title in order to qualify for exemption status.[936] With tax exemption, gay rights organisations would have considerably more funds and the option of hiring professional staff to carry out the work previously done by volunteers. However, even those organisations that were granted this status (as in the case of the group dedicated to the legal defence of lesbian mothers, mentioned above), were generally instructed not to engage in any activities that could be construed as "promoting" homosexuality; there were numerous incidences when groups that had been granted the exemption were threatened with having it removed, because it was thought that they were promoting homosexuality to vulnerable demographics, such as minors.[937]

A press release by the NGTF in February 9, 1977, is indicative of the saturation that the gay rights organization were facing with the IRS. It stated, "if we succeed in obtaining a meeting with the Director of the Internal Revenue Service to discuss refusal of the IRS to give qualified gay organizations tax exempt status, we must have the best attorneys and other professional advisers accompany us."[938]

Carter's Response

The tax issue was one of the issues raised at the White House meeting in March 1977. The NGTF asked Costanza to arrange a meeting with representatives of the IRS. Although the IRS was an independent agency and not under Carter's control, Costanza had pledged on behalf of the administration to help and that "sensitivity to the rights of

[936] Letter from Jaime Green to the NGTF, 22 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 25, CU.
[937] William B. Kelley, The Internal Revenue Service and Income Tax Exemption for Gay Organizations, Material for NGFT meeting with Margaret Costanza, n.d. 1977. NGTF records, Box 144. Folder 25, CU.
[938] NGTF Press Release, 9 February 1977. NGTF records, Box 2, Folder 60. CU.

gay people will be very seriously considered in considering nominees for vacancies on these commissions."[939]

A few months after the request was made at the White House meeting, Costanza arranged for the NGTF to meet with representatives of the IRS. In August 1977, five months after the breakthrough White House meeting, the gay rights organisations were granted tax-exemption. The NGTF commented that "this important ruling is a major reversal of IRS policy, which routinely refused to grant such tax-deductible status unless the applying organization stated that homosexuality is 'a sickness, disturbance, or diseased pathology.' This policy has kept gay organizations from receiving the important tax-deductible contributions which are necessary to fund the major educational projects on the role of gay persons in society."[940] However, the NGTF was not entirely satisfied with that and believed that gay families should have the right to file joint tax returns to declare each other as dependants.[941] Nevertheless, in 1980, the co-directors of the NGTF, Brydon and Valeska, publicly acknowledged Carter's contribution to the decision to grant tax exemption status to gay rights organisations.[942]

The tax exemption hugely affected the resources of gay rights organisations. It meant that organisations which promoted the interests of homosexuals now had considerably more funds and, in some cases, could afford to hire and pay professionals rather than rely on volunteers. They also had more money to spend on advertising, enabling them to reach out to the dispersed homosexual community and grow their membership. Overall, having a larger

[939] News from the NGTF, 31 March 1977, "NGTF-Federal Agency Meetings Set Second White House Conference in September." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.
[940] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU; News from NGTF. "Fund for Human Dignity Receives Tax-Deductible Status." 9 August 1977. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 44. CU.
[941] NGTF press release, October 1979. "Federal Agencies that Discriminate Against Gay Citizens." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[942] News from NGTF, 6 March 1980, "Carter appeals for gay support," NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.

budget at their disposal meant that gay rights organisations could become better organised, bigger, stronger and more influential.

As well as providing the substantial financial benefits discussed above, there were further major, and far-reaching, consequences to the new ruling: firstly, it clearly offered legitimisation and respect to gay rights groups. It meant that these organizations were now officially recognised by the State, not just as interest groups but as legitimate and respected charitable organizations attempting to help people and bring reforms to society. The changes to the law created a sense of legitimacy and official recognition to gay rights organisations, thus they contributed further in changing public discourse about gay rights and to a new cultural framing. Finally, they also signalled to gays that the person occupying the highest office in the land, not only recognised their existence, but also their right to continue their struggle.

Craig Howell told the author about the tax-exemption status, "I do not know how much of a role Carter personally played in getting the IRS to finally grant tax-exempt status to gay organizations; I have always credited Costanza of his staff with getting that done. It's certainly reasonable to think that Carter knew what she was doing with the IRS, so he obviously deserves ultimate credit for the reversal. And yes, this was a major breakthrough, since so many of our community's non-profit groups had been getting nowhere with the IRS homophobes."[943]

Jeffrey Montgomery told the author, "the tax relief changes were amazing for us. For one thing, it meant less scrabbling for enough money to do this. Before, we couldn't afford to pay anyone, so whatever we were able to achieve depended heavily on volunteers. As we all had regular jobs and rent to pay, that restricted what we were able to achieve. But aside from the immediate relief in terms of having more money, Carter's decision to grant us tax-exempt

[943] Craig Howell in a personal interview, 19 March 2016.

status had a huge symbolic importance for us. It meant that we were being recognised as playing a valid role in American political life. A lot of us found him a little conservative, but this was a big thing."[944]

Eddie Sandifer said in a personal interview that "with the tax relief, we were able to do more mailouts and reach many people. Remember there was no Internet in those days. Gays in rural areas and smaller cities and towns were often very isolated and not politically involved. Having more money made it easier to reach people like them and get them involved in the cause. It really helped us to solidify our movement and start making it a truly national one."[945]

David Mack Henderson told the author, "obviously having more money made a huge difference, but being treated with more respect was even more important. I mean, now we had the same tax status as churches. That was one in the eye to the many, many evangelicals – I know it wasn't all of them but it was most – who hated us and thought we were just irredeemable sinners."[946]

The Reaction of the Evangelical Right

It was galling for the evangelical right to see gay-friendly organisations receiving tax breaks. What made it worse was that during this period, the majority of private Christian schools lost their tax-exempt status. This was partly because many of them were de facto segregated by race, with "faith" standing in as a proxy, while most of the others failed to meet their commitment to enrol a minimum quota of minority students.[947] Seeing some of their privileges stripped away while benefits were extended to gay rights organisations was seen by religious conservatives as a slap in the face and increased their dissatisfaction with Carter.

[944] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview, 25 February 2016.
[945] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview 26 February 2016.
[946] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[947] Ciment, 2006: 221; Flippen, 2011: 213.

Furthermore, it also provided them with a unique focus for joint action. Paul Weyrich, co-founder of the Moral Majority, said that key to the evangelicals' stance was "Jimmy Carter's intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax-exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation."[948] Professor Randall Balmer told the author that "that politically conservative evangelicals mobilized politically to defend the tax-exempt status of so-called segregation academies and, specifically, Bob Jones University."[949] Christian schools advocate Robert Billings founded the National Christian Action Coalition to fight the IRS policy change, and declared that the official who approved it did more to bring Christians together "than any man since the Apostle Paul."[950]

MEDIA AND BROADCASTING

In 1976, broadcasters were required to represent minorities, but they were not obliged to present the views of homosexuals. Typically, when homosexuals were represented at all, including in films, they were presented in a negative light. For example, a newspaper headline might say "homosexual robs bank," but the sexuality of a heterosexual burglar would not be mentioned. This trend both spread and perpetuated discrimination towards homosexuals, as being homosexual was portrayed as relevant to a person's criminality. In a press release issued in March, 1978, the NGTF highlighted this issue, stating, "we are all hurt when the news media refer to criminals as 'homosexual' even though the sexual orientation of the person involved is irrelevant. Reports about a 'homosexual hijacker' or a 'homosexual murderer' tend to fix in the public's mind a wholly unjustified link between homosexuality and criminality."[951]

[948] Balmer, 2010: 898.
[949] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.
[950] Ciment, 2006: 221; Williams, 2010: 164.
[951] NGTF Press Release, March 1978, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.

On February 8, 1977, the NGTF issued an alert to the gay media outlining the fact that community broadcasting authorities were not required to interview homosexuals.[952] Given the huge battles taking place at both local and federal levels – and the apparent ease with which religious right wing activists such as Anita Bryant gained access to the airwaves of America – this was clearly a matter of considerable concern. If media outlets did not interview the very minority that was arousing so much ire among right-wing evangelicals, they ran the risk of not having their voices heard at all.

On February 11, 1977, Carol Jennings of the Media Access Project (MAP) wrote to Ronald Gold, the publicist of the NGTF since its foundation in 1973, outlining the efforts MAP had made in the area of working to have the gay community specifically included in the list of the minorities that were not adequately represented in the media. To achieve their aims, she said, they would need to demonstrate that homosexuality was not just about sexual preference "in the bedroom" but that gays were a distinct group, that gayness was a way of life as well as a sexual orientation, and that they faced discrimination, including having historically been rendered invisible by television.[953] Broadcasters were, however, reluctant to list homosexuals as a discrete group. In a letter, also sent on February 11, 1977, the Chief of the Broadcast Bureau, Wallace Johnson, wrote to Congressman Henry Waxman explaining that they had decided not to include homosexuals specifically, but that these could, at a broadcaster's discretion, be included under a category broadly defined as "other."[954]

After noting that Anita Bryant and her husband Bob Green had been given six hours of television time to air their anti-homosexual views, San Francisco gay activists moved to seek equal access. In June 1977, along with the Council of Religion and the Homosexual,

[952] NGTF Gay Media Alert, 8 February 1977, (National Gay Task Force Correspondence) 9/76-2/78 (O/A 4499), 09/1976 - 02/1978. JCPL.
[953] Letter from Carol Jennings to Ronald Gold, 11 February 1977, (Gay Rights: Correspondence) 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978. JCPL.
[954] Letter from Wallace E. Johnson to Henry Waxman, 11 February 1977, (Gay Rights: Correspondence) 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978. JCPL.

Inc., they petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to extend the broadcast fairness doctrine so that homosexuals could answer criticism on television. The petition charged that the station KVOF refused to let gay people have their say. It asked that a Glendale, California station be required to air programming in response to the Bryant exposure.[955]

The FCC refused the requests, but the controversy continued, leading to a new and bigger effort in November 1978 by the NGTF and 142 other gay groups. This time gay rights activists asked that broadcasters should be required to interview all local community leaders, including gays on relevant issues. This time, the FCC set out guidelines that required TV and radio stations to seek input from gay leaders on community topics. The NGTF welcomed the decision as "a major step" for homosexuals, but the religious right reacted angrily, with Falwell and Bryant charging the Commission with "giving queers a voice." So serious was the opposition that the NGTF feared the new dispensation was in danger and urged its members to submit "a large number of letters" to the FCC in support of its new regulation.[956]

Carter's Response

The issue of the FCC was discussed in the March 1977 White House meeting at which the NGTF requested Costanza's assistance in this matter. The FCC, like the IRS, was an independent agency and not under Administration control. However, as in the campaign for the IRS policy change, Costanza promised to help, assuring the NGTF that "sensitivity to the rights of gay people will be very seriously considered in considering nominees for vacancies on these commissions."[957] Eventually, the White House suggested to the FCC that it should draft legislation which would require broadcasters to assess community

[955] *Gay Community News*, 2 July 1977: 2, "Equal Time vs. Anita." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[956] *The Blade*, 8 November 1978: 1, "Pro-Gay Proposal in trouble."
[957] News from the NGTF, 31 March 1977, "NGTF-Federal Agency Meetings Set Second White House Conference in September." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 11. CU.

groups, including gay organisations, and thus determine community broadcast needs.[958]

By March 13, 1980, the FCC had ordered radio and television broadcasters to listen to the concerns of homosexuals and other minorities (such as the deaf) and to ensure that they were adequately and accurately represented. This apparently occurred in response to a petition drawn up by the NGTF and other gay rights groups. The FCC had ruled that while the broadcasters were not under obligation actively to seek out such groups, when the latter identified themselves and showed that "they are a significant element in the community," the broadcasters were then obliged to contact representatives of the community to find out if their needs were being met.[959] Further progress in this area was seen in the treatment of a TV show, *James Robinson Presents*, in which Robinson declared that the murder of Harvey Milk "showed how God felt about gays." Dallas TV station WFAA cancelled the show in 1979 and it was ruled by the FCC to have acted correctly in doing so.[960] Finally, ABC's hit comedy series *Soap* included two key homosexual characters.[961]

Naturally, fundamental evangelicals were not happy with the changes in the television world. On December 1980, shortly after Reagan's victory in the elections, Falwell released a press statement declaring that his Moral Majority, together with other "organizations and individuals," religious and non-religious, would pressure the TV industry to reverse the "trend toward sexual permissiveness, situational ethics and even outright obscenity" in network TV shows. "The trend has never been so obvious as it is this season," Falwell said.[962]

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[958] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU; David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[959] Mayer (*Washington Star*), 13 March, 1980, "FCC Orders Broadcasters to Heed Disabled, Gays." Box NGTF records, 145. Folder 1, CU.
[960] *Off Our Backs*, 1980: Vol 5, No 9. NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[961] *TIME*, 23 April 1979: 73, "How Gay is Gay?"
[962] Shales (*The Washington Post*), 7 December 1980: H1, "Sex on TV: Open Season on Smut."

DADE COUNTY GAY RIGHTS ORDINANCE

Shortly before the 1976 election, Miami's Dade County voted to enact a law initially mooted by Dade County Commissioner Ruth Shack which banned discrimination in areas of housing, employment, and public accommodation based on sexual orientation.[963] In the summer of 1976, the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays had been formed to support gay-friendly politicians. They supported Shack, and she had introduced the amendment at their urging. Commissioners in favour of the change and prominent local businessmen had stated their support.[964]

Right wing evangelical Anita Bryant launched a campaign to have the ordinance overturned.[965] Her organisation, Save Our Children, the first organized opposition to the gay rights movement, with widespread evangelical support, claimed that the new law would force private and religious, as well as state, schools to hire homosexuals. She implied that homosexual men were paedophiles, and mobilised huge numbers of voters.[966] She took out an advertisement in the *Miami Herald* that trumpeted, "The Civil Rights of Parents: to Save their Children from Homosexual Influence," and referred to heterosexuals as "the Normal Majority."[967] Bryant declared homosexuals "human garbage" and was supported by Falwell, who said that "so-called gay folks would kill you as soon as look at you."[968] Largely in response to her efforts, the membership of the NGTF increased dramatically.[969]

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[963] *The Advocate*. 13 July 1977, "Miami." NGTF records, Box 148, Folder 56, CU.
[964] Arnold (*Miami Herald*), 27 March 1977, "Gay Rights Referendum Set June 7." NGTF records, Box 148. Folder 56, CU.; Rose (*TIME*), 15 April 1977: 48. "Trouble in Paradise."
[965] Arnold (*Miami Herald*), 16 March 1977, "Battle Lines are Drawn." NGTF records, Box 148. Folder 56, CU.; *The Washington Post*, 6 May 1977, "Gay Rights Activist."
[966] Lubow and Howard (*Newsweek*), 18 December 1978: 91, "The Homosexual Teacher."
[967] Advertisement in the *Miami Herald*. 20 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 148. Folder 56, CU.
[968] Flippen, 2011: 143.
[969] Bernstein, 2002: 555; Cruikshank, 1992: 72; Fetner, 2008: 25.

Carter's response

Carter avoided taking a public position on the issue, claiming he was "too busy" to do so.[970] However, gay rights activists in Miami told the White House that "support for gays is needed in Miami and someone from the White House" should go there. Frank Kemeny thought it would be better if a "male be sent from the White House."[971] Costanza expressed her willingness to go to Miami, but Hamilton Jordan sought to stop her, arguing that it would look as if Carter was taking a position on a local issue.[972] Costanza did go to Dade where she campaigned for support for Shack's ordinance.

The result was that Bryant and other conservative Christians took the position that Jordan had predicted. Bryant, who had supported Carter in the presidential elections, denounced him in an interview in *Playboy* in May 1978 for allowing a "close associate" to act as Costanza had. She said, "I looked at Carter as a hero, as one who had caught the eye and the heartbeat of the grassroots in America. I really had great expectations of him … he allows Midge Costanza to go down to Dade Country on a local issue and campaign for homosexuality… she has an open door to the President of the United States, who claims to be a born-again Christian, when homosexuality is at the very core of what God is against."[973] George Hansen, a Member of Congress, wrote to Carter to complain, "My concern is that what began as a local fight is now being billed as a national battle where the gays have the support of the President, members of the Cabinet, of the Congress and other high officials of government."[974]

On June 7, 1977, Bryant and her supporters prevailed.[975] 59% of the local electorate

[970] Memo from Marilyn Haft to Dick Pettigrew, 28 November 1977. Margaret Costanza Files, Gay rights: Carter's views on, Box 4. JCPL.
[971] Memo from Marilyn Haft to Midge Costanza, 31 March 1977. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[972] Memo from Marilyn Haft to Midge Costanza, 31 March 1977. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[973] *Playboy,* May 1978, Anita Bryant Interview.
[974] Letter from George Hansen to Jimmy Carter, 8 April 1977. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[975] Kleiman (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1977: D21. "Thousands Backing Homosexuals March Uptown to Columbus Circle."

had voted for Carter, indicating the great trouble he would continue to have in balancing the demands of Christian conservatives with human rights and in particular gay rights activists.[976] *The Advocate*, the gay rights newspaper, referred to Bryant and the anti-gay movement as "the forces of evil" and said: "It is the day after the Battle of Dade County. Like most of you, I'm licking my wounds. I'm depressed, angry and frustrated. Our first task must be to get through these emotions, taking care not to overreact. Then from the ashes of defeat, we must resume the war, seize the initiative from our enemies and proceed to win our rights despite Anita Bryant."[977]

The defeat in Dade County proved to be a rallying call to gay rights activists. One person who was not downhearted was Jean O'Leary. She pointed out that the anti-gay campaign had resulted in the NGTF's budget and membership being doubled while individual gay groups had found a new sense of solidarity and common cause. In a sense, she said, Anita Bryant had benefited the movement and even characterised her as "the best thing that ever happened to us."[978] An unnamed New Jersey activist stated: "there will be more people fighting mad today than there have been in the last couple of years. As American citizens and taxpayers, we won't stand by and let our constitutional rights be tromped [sic] on."[979]

CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 6 (The Briggs Initiative on Homosexuality in the Teaching Profession)

In 1977, the Southern Baptist General Convention of California moved to declare certain employment areas off limits to homosexuals. The Convention passed a resolution asserting

[976] *The Voice.* 20 June 1977. "The Gays Lose Dade County." NGTF records, Box 148. Folder 56, CU.
[977] *The Advocate*. n.d. 'Opening Space.' NGTF records, Box 148. Folder 56, CU.
[978] Keerdoja (*Newsweek*), 13 March 1978: 14, "Anita and the Gays."
[979] *Daily Record*, 9 June 1977, "Florida Vote "Disgusts" Morris Gays. Morris County. New Jersey." NGTF records, Box 148, Folder 56, CU.

that homosexuality was sinful and that gays should not be employed in a range of jobs, including public education.[980] The same year, also in California, State Senator John Briggs filed a petition with the requisite 500,000 signatures that qualified it for the general election ballot in May 1978. If passed, homosexual teachers, or those who discussed homosexuality in a way that "condoned" it, would be dismissed. The proposal was known as Proposition 6, and launched in San Francisco, which Briggs described as "ground zero… of homosexuality in the United States."[981]

Briggs argued that homosexual teachers and those allied with them were conspiring to use the school system in order to impose "non-morality" on children. He had support from a wide range of evangelical leaders, including Tim LaHaye, whose book *The Unhappy Gays* had just been published. LaHaye stated: "You can expect homosexual teachers single-handedly to double the homosexual community within ten years, not by recruiting, but by preparing youngsters mentally for the recruiters."[982] Robert Grant, 42, an independent Baptist minister and Wheaton College graduate, created the anti-gay rights organisation, American Christian Cause, to campaign for the Briggs Initiative in 1978.[983] This group was essentially "a merger of several pre-existing anti-gay, anti-pornography, pro-family groups on the West Coast."[984]

Carter's response

Both pro- and anti-gay rights activists rallied, each demanding to know Carter's position. Initially, Carter stated, "I know that there are homosexuals who teach and the children don't suffer, but this is a subject I don't particularly want to involve myself in. I've got enough

[980] Chandler and Dart (*Los Angeles Times*), 3 November 1978, "Many Church Leaders Oppose Prop. 6."
[981] Heffernan, 2013: 21.
[982] Williams, 2010: 152.
[983] Williams, 2010: 164.
[984] Guth, 1983: 31.

problems without taking on another. I don't see the need to change laws to permit homosexuals to marry. I don't see homosexuality is the desire of homosexuals for the rest of society to approve and to add its acceptance of homosexuality as a normal sexual relationship. I don't feel that it's a normal interrelationship. But, at the same time, I don't feel that society, through its laws, ought to abuse or harass the homosexual. I think it's one of those things that is not accepted by most Americans as a normal sexual relationship. In my mind it's certainly not a substitute for the family life that I described to you."[985]

The gay community was disappointed as it had hoped for a clear statement of opposition to Briggs' initiative. In the autumn of 1978, Carter endorsed the re-election of Governor Jerry Brown in California and appeared in San Francisco to support him. Brown, an opponent of the Briggs initiative, was popular among liberals in California, including the state's homosexual population. While in San Francisco, Carter publicly took a stand on the issue and expressed his clear opposition to Briggs's Proposition 6. However, again some felt he did not state his position as strongly as he should have.[986]

Lisa Keen told the author, "It wasn't a forceful statement and came after his challenger for re-election (Ronald Reagan) had already spoken against it."[987] James Fallows, Carter's speechwriter at the time, recalled in a personal interview that Carter "opposed it, while on a trip to San Francisco" and that "in general" his approach to life was that of a "tolerant Christian." He said, "his faith was (and is) important to him, but in an inclusive rather than exclusive way."[988]

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[985] *Gay Community News*, 2 July 1977: 1, "Carter Won't Take a Stand on Gay Teachers." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[986] *Sentinel*, 17 November 1977. Box 152. Folder 46, NGTF records, CU; Kelly (*Chicago Tribune*), "Carter Risks Ire of Gay Foes."
[987] Lisa Keen in a personal interview, 4 March 2017.
[988] James Fallows in a personal interview, 24 February 2016.

Carter's position on Proposition 6 made him the first sitting president of the United States to make a public pronouncement that supported gay rights.[989] For this, he received a formal but warmly-worded letter from the NGTF shortly afterwards, thanking him for his support.[990] Right wing evangelicals were unhappy. One said that Carter's actions had "cast grave doubt over the credibility of his confession of being born again by associating himself on the side of moral perversion and homosexual wickedness."[991]

Costanza appeared at a fundraiser to support the campaign to defeat Proposition 6 and at a "luncheon" for the gay community and its supporters.[992] She also sent a mailgram to the NGTF saying: "I wish that I could stand with you personally as you gather to demonstrate in California. The employment right and right of free speech of all our citizens, gay and non-gay, are under severe attack. Proposition 6 is a threat to the principles which have been basic to our American way of life. We must use all our efforts to prevent this sort of discrimination from becoming law."[993]

Carter's opposition to the Briggs initiative inspired Harvey Milk and other gay rights activists to push for greater concessions from his administration. He sent Mike Chanin, deputy presidential assistant, to a fundraiser attended on by Jerry Brown on November 27. Chanin read out a statement about the Carter administration's opposition to discrimination on the grounds of race, sex or sexual orientation, and was heckled by the crowd.[994]

On July 30, 1978, Costanza wrote a warm, personal note to Milk, stating her view that the battle against the Briggs Initiative was very important, and extending an offer to help.[995] Later that year, the Briggs Initiative was defeated by 3.9 million to 2.8 million votes, which

[989] *Sentinel*, 17 November 1977. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[990] Letter from Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller, 21 November 1978, (Gay) - Homosexuals, (7/20/79-5/31/80), 07/20/1979 - 05/31/1980, Container 7. JCPL.
[991] Freedman, 2005: 242.
[992] Fonda and Costanza to speak Anti-Prop 6. n.d. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[993] Mailgram from Midge Costanza to the NGTF. 19 October 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[994] Bunniller, 28 November 1977. 'Gay Rights, Laser Lights & Jerry Brown.' Costanza folder, Box 11. JCPL.
[995] Letter from Costanza to Milk, 30 July 1978, (Gay Rights—Harvey Milk Speech & Letter) 6/78-7/78 (O/A 5771), 06/1978 - 07/1978 JCPL.

was seen as a major win for gay rights activists, as well as those interested in civil liberties in general. Briggs, who had expected to win, responded by calling San Francisco the "moral garbage dump of homosexuality in this country."[996] Nancy Higgins praised in a personal interview the input of both Carter and Costanza in its defeat, "Midge was much more vocally supportive than he (Carter) was, of course, but he did come out in support of a 'No' vote, and this was all that mattered to us. It was actually more than enough and yes, it certainly played an important role in defeating Proposition 6."[997]

This was not a simple victory for gay rights. The Briggs Initiative was also defeated because of opposition from teachers' unions and Ronald Reagan, who was no friend to gay activists in general, but whose libertarianism was offended by the Initiative.[998] It is also important to note that, while the defeat of the Briggs Initiative was a major win for gay rights activists, it also left them no better off than before.[999] Moreover, it had proven to be a great resource for the mobilisation of the evangelicals, who increasingly discussed American society in terms of a battle.[1000] Gay rights activists agreed with the concept of the struggle as a "battle", and as the debate about homosexuals in public sector jobs progressed, gay people became increasingly willing to test their cases in court, as in the case of a challenge from one individual to the Dallas Police Force, which had a blanket ban against homosexuals serving.[1001]

Evangelical Reaction to Carter's Opposition to Proposition 6

[996] Bull and Gallagher, 1996: 18.
[997] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 22 June 2016.
[998] Clendinen and Nagourney, 1999: 387; Stone, 2012: 14.
[999] Stone, 2012: 44.
[1000] Bohannon et al, 1984: 10.
[1001] Gay Rights Advocates Annual Report, 1979, Gay/Lesbians, (2/8/79-6/30/80), 02/08/1979 - 06/30/1980, Container 7. JCPL.

Carter's opposition to Proposition 6 outraged many evangelicals, even the Southern Baptists. William Hann, President of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California, wrote to Carter that his opposition to Briggs' proposition "hurt" Southern Baptists who had "worked hard to pass Proposition 6," leaving them "wondering why Southern Baptists are not together on moral issues." Hann also sent Carter some examples of gay literature and told him, "I feel you would not want your daughter exposed to this any more than we do."[1002]

Carter did not answer the letter in person, but the White House issued a form letter that stated, "We have noted your comments and assure you that the President appreciates your interest in this legislation."[1003] Shortly afterwards, Robert Hughes, of the same Convention, wrote to Carter to express the churches' "grave disappointment" over Carter's "public opposition to an issue so strongly supported by his fellow Christians and Baptists. We furthermore encourage him to reconsider his stand and to give his unreserved support to future efforts to oppose the acceptance of homosexuality as a normal, if not privileged, lifestyle."[1004]

Among the fiercest opponents of the gay cause was Robert Grant, who claimed to know that homosexuals were present in significant numbers - "rampant" was the word he used - in schools and government, even churches. He stepped up his attack by broadening the American Christian Cause movement, which he had founded, into a much larger conservative organisation, Christian Voice.[1005] Despite his deeply-held faith, Carter's disconnect from the feelings of the evangelical right are typified by comments he made to a group of Southern Baptist men in 1978: "you can't divorce religious belief from public service… at the same time, of course, in public office you cannot impose your religious beliefs on others."[1006]

[1002] Letter from William Hann to Carter, 7 November 1978. Southern Baptist Convention Files. JCPL.
[1003] Letter from Landon Kite to William Hann, 29 November 1978, Southern Baptist Convention Files. JCPL.
[1004] Letter from Robert Hughes to Carter, 7 December 1978, Southern Baptist Convention Files Name Files. JCPL.
[1005] *The Blade*, '1 March 1979: 4, 'Christian Lobby Underway."
[1006] Wooley and Peters, 1979: n.p.

OTHER POSITIVE POLICIES AND DECISIONS BY CARTER REGARDING GAY RIGHTS

In addition to the major aforementioned changes, a range of minor breakthroughs under Carter, in their various ways, made a meaningful and positive contribution to the lives of gays and emboldened public discourse as to gay rights and homosexuality.

- For a start, under the Carter administration attention was paid to anachronisms such as the inclusion of a description that arsonists are frequently homosexuals in a manual used to train fire-fighters. Allison Thomas, staff assistant to Wexler, personally contacted Gordon Vickery of the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration to see if this unsubstantiated claim could be excised from training manuals.[1007] Brydon and Valeska's letter, dated February 22, 1980 (referenced above), points out that opposition to gay rights frequently emanated from "uniformed public safety organisations such as municipal fire departments," making this an important issue that went far beyond presenting matter of archaic material in a training manual.[1008]
- Carter created a new Task Force on Sex Discrimination and reported he was "ordering" the heads of departments "to take the personal responsibility to examine their own attitudes, policies, and directives."[1009]
- Homosexuals were no longer barred from working with the Peace Corps or the Agency for International Development.[1010]

[1007] Communication from Allison Thomas to Gordon Vickery with NGTF letter attached. 22 February 1980, National Gay Task Force, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980. JCPL.
[1008] Communication from Allison Thomas to Gordon Vickery with NGTF letter attached. 22 February 1980, National Gay Task Force, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980. JCPL.
[1009] "Women's Equality Day, 1977: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1010] Letter from the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.

- In January 1977, the Civil Service Commission had refused to accept that it had any responsibility in the area of sexual orientation, "unless and until the Congress specifically authorizes it and provides funds for it."[1011] By August 1977, through Carter's efforts, the Civil Service Commission agreed "for the first time to consider harassment cases against gays as within their jurisdiction."[1012]
- Carter gave playwright Tennessee Williams, an open homosexual, the Medal of Freedom, indicating not just his respect for the man, but the growing acceptance of gay individuals in American society, witnessed –in a very public forum.[1013] The ceremony took place in the White House on June 9, 1980, with a member of the Marine honour guard assisting. In his remarks honouring Williams, Carter said: "His work is truly remarkable, the enjoyment that people have derived during his own lifetime and I'm sure for many decades and centuries in the future, will indeed be a reminder of what America is in its challenge, in its failures, in its dreams, its hopes for the future… Tennessee Williams shows us that the truly heroic in life or art is human compassion."[1014]
- Carter officially proclaimed August 26, 1977—the anniversary of woman suffrage—to be Women's Equality Day, and used it to reaffirm his support for the Equal Rights Amendment. He said, "Strong action is needed to guarantee women total equality in the areas of politics and government, employment and related benefits, health care, housing and justice.... This is a crucial point in the struggle to achieve full equality for women under the law."[1015]

[1011] Bernstein, 2002: 551.
[1012] OPL Records of Meetings, July 1977, Midge Costanza Archives, MCI; Letter from Midge Costanza to James Woodward, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1013] Memorandum for Anne Wexler from Allison Thomas regarding a meeting with Larry Bush, freelance reporter for gay media, 15 April 1980, Anne Wexler's Subject Files, Gay Issues, container 105. JCPL.
[1014] *The Blade*, 12 June 1980: 1, "Carter Honours Tennessee Williams."
[1015] "Women's Equality Day, 1977: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America." n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

CONCLUSION

The second half of the 1970s saw a notable strengthening of gay rights organisations. Under Carter, gay people and the issues of concern to them entered the public domain to an extent never seen before, but the cultural environment was fundamentally hostile to their cause and Carter had little space to manoeuvre and introduce sympathetic new laws. What he did, wherever possible, Carter used the power of his office to secure positive change in the field of gay rights. Overall, his presidency notched up many practical gains for homosexuals as Carter contributed to major improvements in the areas of federal employment, immigration, the rights of gay war veterans, the rights of gay prisoners, the tax-exempt status of gay rights organisations, and more. Some of these significant innovations received relatively little attention at the time, and some have received little attention ever since.

By opening the doors of the White House and Federal agencies to gay rights activists, by addressing their issues and by making tax-exempt status available to gay rights organizations, Carter offered further legitimisation and visibility to the gay community. Homosexuals were now increasingly seen in direct dialogue with federal agencies with the unequivocal support of the president himself, who was not only listening to their concerns, but actively attempting to address them. These were important acts in cultural framing and changing public discourse about homosexuality and gay rights; from being marginalised people on the fringes of society, homosexual men and women took their place in society as regular Americans, entitled to the same rights as everyone else. At the same time, the White House, by facilitating meetings between the NGTF and Federal agencies, turns out to be the most important resource for the gay rights activists. Thus, Carter here again makes simultaneously a contribution to cultural framing and need to create organisational resources, both extremely important for gay rights activists.

Carter's policies powerfully affected conservative Christians and evangelicals, who saw the increasing visibility of homosexuals in public life as a threat to the family and to the American way of life. That these changes were effected by Carter, considered by many to be "one of us" and the man for whom they had voted, added salt to their wounds. Angered, outraged and believing they had been betrayed, the evangelical right attempted to stop what Carter had started. As we will see in Chapter Seven, Carter's gay rights policies were one of the main reasons for the formation of a new movement which came to be known as the "New Right." This new movement acted clearly as a counter-movement to the gay rights movement, attempting to halt the advances towards gay rights and the increasing visibility and assimilation of homosexuals in American public life.

An illustration of the progress of gay rights and the change of public discourse about homosexuality during his presidency is the following statement by Robert Malson, Carter's associate director of the White House domestic policy staff. In May 1980, Malson claimed with justification that, "Gay people are being drawn into the everyday routine decisions of staff and are being accepted as part of the political community. At the White House gay issues are an active part of the responsibilities of staff people. On both the Domestic Policy staff and the Public Liaison office staff people are specifically assigned to monitor gay and lesbian concerns."[1016] Carter, above all, presided over a White House that showed in a myriad of ways that things had started to change for homosexuals in America.

[1016] Memorandum from Robert Malson to administration staff, 20 May 1980. Robert Malson File, Homosexuals, (7/20/79-5/31/80), 07/20/1979 - 05/31/1980. JCPL.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE AND THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON FAMILIES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we examine two events, which were of major importance to the campaign for gay rights during Carter's presidency; the National Women's Conference (NWC) and the White House Conference on Families (WHCF). The NWC, the first Conference specifically on women's rights in the USA, was seen by lesbian rights activists as an excellent opportunity to raise their profile, legitimise their cause and make their voices heard. The WHCF, an event conceived by Carter with the aim of strengthening the American family, was seen by gay rights activists as a chance to achieve the same goals as their lesbian counterparts hoped to achieve via the Women's Conference. Both groups of activists ended up achieving even more they had hoped for, and now these conferences are considered to be landmarks in the history and development of gay and lesbian rights. However, Carter's role in turning these events into such major successes for homosexual activists has never been examined, and so remains underappreciated.

As we will see, Carter's decisions were catalysts not only in the build-up to and the organization of both events, but also in their outcomes with regards to gay and lesbian rights. This chapter will show that both events would have turned out very differently without Carter's personal contribution. Both events were also of significance to the evangelical right and conservative Christians and we will examine their reactions, too. The chapter focusses not so much on the conferences themselves as on their background, their impact and most importantly, Carter's role and how it contributed to the furtherance of gay rights.

THE NATIONAL WOMENS CONFERENCE

Background

In 1973, four years before Carter became President, the United Nations announced that 1975 would be International Women's Year. Subsequently, US President Gerald Ford created a National Committee tasked to "promote equality between men and women," which one year later produced a report, *To Form a More Perfect Union … Justice for American Women*. The report contained 115 recommendations for the improvement of women's lives through government action. Congress directed the Committee to convene a National Women's Conference, preceded by state and regional meetings, and preparatory work began without delay. The Committee sent state co-ordinating bodies a list of sixteen topics to consider while preparing recommendations for a final plan of action.[1017]Arriving in office two years after the announced International Women's Year, Carter moved swiftly to get the conference off the ground. He appointed a new National Committee, which put the state and regional meetings into motion, for a national conference in Houston in November 1977.

The main concern for feminists at the time was the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Peter Bourne told the author that Carter openly supported the ERA and women's rights. He said that "once in the White House, he hired Sarah Weddington, a lawyer in *Roe v. Wade,* as the key staff member on women's issues, and put many more women in high appointed positions than any previous president."[1018] In addition, he appointed Judy Carter, his daughter-in-law, as his personal representative on the ERA. She travelled across the country, speaking and raising funds for the amendment,[1019] becoming the "First Family's most vocal promoter" of the ERA.[1020] Professor Randall Balmer told the author that Carter confided to

[1017] Mattingly, 2016: 145-6.
[1018] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.
[1019] James (*Evening Sun*), 13 December 1977, "Costanza to Brief Carter on Women's Parl."
[1020] *Spotlight,* 24 April 1978: 16, "Champion of Homosexuals." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

him in later life that "one of the deep disappointments of his presidency was his failure to shepherd the Equal Rights Amendment to ratification."[1021]

Only three months into his presidency, Carter had appointed more women to his cabinet than any president in US history, but some feminists were not happy. In March 1977, Costanza told him that the National Women's Political Caucus felt he could have done even more and that they were disappointed by the "calibre of women named to top positions within the government."[1022] How far and how fast he was moving was a constant refrain in Carter's relations with both the women's movement and the gay rights campaigners. His efforts were more generous and more swiftly expedited than those of any of his predecessors, but they were never quite enough for the activists. In a personal interview, Peter Bourne commented that "throughout his (Carter's) presidency, the women's movement was always lobbying for more, despite what he had done for them."[1023]

Before the Conference

Costanza clearly realised that the NWC would provide an excellent opportunity to promote many of her favoured causes, such as the ERA, access to abortion and gay rights. She was one of the most influential forces behind the organization of the Conference, working endlessly to ensure that the "right people," that is, people with the same views as herself, would be in the right places. Her aim was to make the national committee appointed by Carter more diverse and progressive than the committee Ford had set up. This was to be achieved by replacing conservative members with more progressive ones.

[1021] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.
[1022] Costanza's report on the 10 March National Women's Political Caucus Reception, 29 March 1977. Box 323, Folder Women's Issues. JCPL.
[1023] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.

One of the first things Costanza did was to recommend Bella Abzug as chair of the Committee and Carter accepted this.[1024] Even so, the appointment was not due solely to Costanza because senior members of the Carter's administration, like Eizenstat, Powell and Wexler, also backed Abzug. They told Carter that she could be "a strong card" in the 1980 Presidential election because she represented several groups.[1025] Nevertheless, as far as lesbian rights and the feminist movement were concerned, she was the one who held things together. Professor Doreen Mattingly told the author that her appointment "was important because she understood the tensions in 1977 within the women's movement over homophobia and racism and classism." She also said the women's movement in 1977 was "really torn up" by these factors. "She understood that for gay rights, for lesbian rights, for there not to be a sexual preference plank would be a continuation of a problem within the women's movement."[1026]

However, Abzug's support for the ERA and for gay rights made her a red rag for the religious right and her appointment enraged many evangelical leaders. Pat Robertson, who had initially supported Carter, denounced him after her appointment and said, "I wouldn't let Bella Abzug scrub the floors of any organisation I was head of. But Carter put her in charge of all the women of America."[1027]

Costanza convinced Carter to remove practically all the conservative members of the Committee appointed by Ford and replace them with feminists such as Gloria Steinem.[1028] A very important appointment for lesbian rights was that of Ruth Abram, an open lesbian, co-executive director of the Women's Action Alliance and a board member of the NGTF.[1029]

[1024] Mattingly, 2016: 146
[1025] Memo of Stuart Eizenstat, Jody Powel and Anne Wexler to Carter, 24 April 1978. Box 82, Folder 4/24/78. JCPL.
[1026] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[1027] Dabney *(Harper's)*, August 1980: 38, "God's Own Network." Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.
[1028] It's Time: Newsletter of the NGTF. November 1977, "Lesbian Rights: A Feminist Issue." NGTF records, Box: 147, Folder 2. CU.
[1029] News from NGTF, 15 April 1977, "Sexual Preference Added to List of International Women's Year Issues." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 32. CU.

However, the most important appointment of all for lesbian rights was that of Jean O'Leary. Her appointment in Carter's Committee meant that she was the first openly homosexual person to be appointed to a Government post and even more importantly, she was appointed by the President of the USA himself.[1030] This was obviously a clear statement by Carter of his belief that everyone was equal under the law and there should be no discrimination against homosexuals. Costanza's role in the preparations for the Conference was not limited to recommending appointees to the Women's Committee. Professor Charlotte Bunch told the author that Costanza also "did a lot to help keep Rosalynn Carter and the other women in the administration sort of positive about the gay rights agenda as part of the Houston conference."[1031]

Predictably, evangelicals and other conservative Christians were outraged. One of them wrote, "Pres. Carter's recent appointment of an admitted militant feminist homosexual to a high federal position, the first in history, proves that this country is becoming sicker all the time. Her appointment to a top federal position is a slap in the face to every God-loving American, whether father, mother or single person, who believes in decent living and normal relationship as naturally intended."[1032]

Preparations for the November, 1977 Houston conference were massive, involving preliminary conferences in states and territories before July, 1977. More than 150,000 women voted to elect delegates to the NWC, with gay rights and conservative activists fighting neck and neck to get as many delegates as they could get.[1033] When the National Committee held its first meeting on April 11 and 12, 1977, O'Leary recommended that the agendas of the state conferences should include the question of lesbian rights as well as other issues

[1030] Midge Costanza interview to Ashley Boyd. 2010. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1031] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.
[1032] Injun Woody: With Some Reservation. n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1033] Mattingly, 2016: 145.

excluded by the Ford Committee.[1034] O'Leary and Abram managed to convince the Committee to add a "sexual or affectional preference" resolution to the list of the Committee's issues recommended for workshops at the state conferences.[1035]

Particularly relevant to the preparations were O'Leary's activities within the NGTF, where she had developed a Women's Caucus, described as "a formally constituted body of lesbians and lesbian-feminists" whose aim was to facilitate "a lesbian presence in all women's issues, projects, and organizations throughout the country" and to "reflect our commitment to feminist principles and to the integration of the battles against both sexism and heterosexism."[1036] In O'Leary's view, full lesbian participation at the National Conference would upgrade lesbian rights from "a minority concern" to a "core issue."[1037]

Passage of the resolution was followed by a flurry of mailings from the NGTF urging lesbians and non-lesbian feminists to turn up in full strength at the state conferences since lesbian rights was now a "legitimate" women's issue.[1038] A NGTF press release said, "An active lesbian presence in these state conferences is crucial...because resolutions emerging from them will have a great influence on shaping the legislative goals of the women's movement."[1039] O'Leary expressed fears that "without a strong lesbian-feminist presence . . . our issues and our needs will consciously or unconsciously be overlooked" and asked lesbians to "spread the word and encourage lesbians to join the fight for full participation in the goals of International Women's Year."[1040]

[1034] Charlotte Bunch: A Brief History of Lesbian Organization for IWY. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1035] News from NGTF, 15 April 1977, "Sexual Preference Added to List of International Women's Year Issues." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 32. CU.
[1036] NGTF Press release: "Women's Caucus Formed at NGTF," 1 August 1977. NGTF records, Box 9, Folder 40. CU.
[1037] NGTF Press release: "NGFT Women invite feedback on IWY State meetings," 1 August 1977. NGTF records, Box 9, Folder 40, CU.
[1038] Charlotte Bunch: A Brief History of Lesbian Organization for IWY. Midge Costanza Archives, MCI.
[1039] NGTF Press release, "National Gay Task Force Urges Lesbians to Participate in International Women's Year Conference." June 1977. NGTF records, Box 36, File 15, CU.
[1040] *The Lesbian Feminist*, June 1977: 3, "Lesbian Voices Needed: I.W.Y. State Conference." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 61. CU.

A helping hand for the lesbian cause came in August of 1977 with the formation of the Women's Conference Network. This brought together something like forty organisations, ranging from the American Jewish Committee and Church Women United to the League of Women Voters and the National Educational Association.[1041]

O'Leary's energetic and well-planned campaign met with great success. So, too, did that of her leading opponent, Phyllis Schlafly, founder of the conservative, pro-family Eagle Forum. Homophobic and anti-feminist backers of Schlafly saw the women's movement as socially radical and destructive of the traditional family and expressed their opinions in angry and uninhibited rhetoric.[1042] Schlafly warned that the state conferences would be full of "Libs and Lesbians, Frauds and Follies," who would seek to promote witchcraft, among other things.[1043]

Lesbian activists realised what sort of opposition they would face in Houston when anti-feminists mobilised their forces at several of the state conferences. In a personal interview, Professor Charlotte Bunch recalled that conservatives and anti-feminists far outnumbered the lesbian community in some big city areas and activist leaders sent emergency calls to their rank and file to get to the conferences and neutralise the numerical advantage enjoyed by their opponents. Professor Bunch considered the state conferences to be very important in the "solidification of the right wing, because this was a state-by-state conference where there were delegations elected in every state and it's the only time that the US Congress allocated money for a national women's conference as opposed to just independent civil society, you know NGOs doing their own thing. And it became a battleground with the right wing in every state. We had delegations and the lesbian feminists which I was helping to organize with O'Leary, it's really when we solidified our support from

[1041] Komisar (*The Nation*), 10 December 1977: 625, "Feminism as National Politics."
[1042] *The Washington Post*, 27 November 1977, "Home From Houston."
[1043] Goodman (*The Washington Post*), 17 November 1977: A23, "At Stake in Houston: Perception of Power."

the feminist movement as a whole, the more mainstream women's organizations, very much in response to the right wing attack."[1044]

Because of the conflicts at the state conferences, it became clear to the White House that the Conference in Houston was likely to be a contentious affair. As a result, presidential staff introduced measures to put some distance between the White House and the Conference, including limiting the number of presidential aides who would attend, and turning down requests that Carter speak at the meeting, although his wife Rosalynn would be present.[1045]

When all the state conferences were concluded, the NGTF conducted a survey to identify the lesbian delegates elected by the conferences to participate in Houston, and requested assistance to finance its preparations.[1046] At the same time, the National Women's Committee set out its aims for Houston in a report entitled *A Plan for Action.* The ERA was the lodestar but the Plan included a four-point gay rights plank which demanded legislative changes of a boldly radical nature. The programme called for:

- Legislation to ban discrimination in employment.
- The repeal of laws touching on private sexual behaviour between consenting adults.
- The passage of a law that would make sexual preference irrelevant in the area of child custody.
- Improved lesbian visibility in the media.[1047]

The House of Representatives subsequently approved the report for the conference by a simple majority. [1048] The effort required from Costanza to get this plank through was

[1044] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17/06/2014.
[1045] Memorandum of Hugh Carter to Midge Costanza, November 3, 1977, Folder IWY- 3/77-3/78, box 132. JCPL.
[1046] News from NGTF. 9 August 1977, "Lesbian Plan for International Women's Year Meeting in Houston: Funds Needed to Finance Activities." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 45. CU.
[1047] NGTF Press release, "National Gay Task Force Urges Lesbians to Participate in International Women's Year Conference." June 1977. NGTF records, Box 35, File 15, CU.
[1048] Barbara Jordan's keynote speech at the National Women's Conference, 18 November 1977. Texas Archives of the Moving Image. Available at: http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/2013_02597

immense but her success was evident in the facts. Professor Charlotte Bunch wrote in 1977, the Ford Committee "offered little hope" and it "clearly did not intend to include lesbianism in its deliberations." In addition, no open lesbians were involved in pre-conference planning at either state or national level.[1049] However, when the Conference took place eleven months later, the *Plan for Action* included a resolution for sexual preferences which had been supported by no fewer than thirty states. Furthermore, at least 120 delegates were openly lesbian while state delegations came with scores of closeted lesbians and gay rights supporters.[1050]

This tremendous turnaround should clearly be credited to Costanza, who was the driving force behind the organization of the Conference, but also to Carter, who accepted all her recommendations. It was Costanza who recommended Abzug, Abram, O'Leary and all the other members of the National Committee to Carter, effectively asking him to install them in place of Ford's appointees, and this is what he had done. Obviously none of this would have happened if Carter had not replaced Ford's Committee with progressive women.

THE CONFERENCE

The Conference took place at a time of increasing mobilisation of feminist activists in the US and elsewhere, but their opponents ensured that they and their message would also be seen. A day before the Conference opened, a large number of anti-feminists demonstrated in the city. The same day an advertisement in a Houston newspaper, paid for by Christian conservatives, showed a small, fair girl with a bouquet of flowers, primly asking, "Mommy, when I grow up, can I be a lesbian?" [1051] On November 17, on the eve of the conference, the *Washington*

[1049] Charlotte Bunch: A Brief History of Lesbian Organization for IWY. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1050] Charlotte Bunch: A Brief History of Lesbian Organization for IWY. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1051] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 12. "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, Sally Bingham Centre (hereafter cited as SBC), Duke University Special Collections Library (hereafter cited as DUSCL).

Post carried an editorial declaring, "What is at stake in Houston is the perception of political power. Everyone agrees that the conference will be a symbol, a message, a test of clout."[1052]

The NWC duly opened on November 18, 1977 and ended on November 21. It was chaired by Bella Abzug, who was described by the *Washington Post* as "the mother of this convention."[1053] Some 20,000 women attended the Conference along with more than 2,000 commissioners, elected delegates, alternates, and volunteers, plus some 18,000 observers.[1054] At least 120 delegates were lesbians while 320 were conservatives and many more were unidentified attendees from both sides.[1055] Three organised lesbian groups were the Lesberadas, a Houston lesbian collective, the California IWY Support Coalition, and the NGTF.[1056]

That the women's movement was now a mainstream feature of American life was demonstrated by the massive media coverage the Conference received and by the status of many attending. Hundreds of television cameramen and newspaper reporters gave minute-by-minute accounts of the proceedings, highlighting the prestigious presence not only of First Lady Rosalynn Carter, but also of two other First Ladies, Betty Ford and Lady Bird Johnson.[1057] Reflecting an increasing polarisation on women's and family issues, the Conference was largely divided between "pro-family" women who opposed gay rights and other liberal ideals, and feminists who included a cadre of gay rights activists. Very soon, proceedings began to look like two conferences taking place rather than one. Feminist speakers would address a feminist audience in one hall while anti-feminists would address

[1052] Goodman (*The Washington Post*), 17 November 1977: A23. "At Stake in Houston: Perception of Power."
[1053] Quinn (*The Washington Post*), 23 November 1977: B1, "The Pedestal has Crashed: Pride and Paranoia in Houston Notebook."
[1054] NGTF Press Release, "Lesbian rights proposal controversial issue at Houston's National Women's Conference." 18 November 1977. NGTF records, Box 36, File 31, CU.
[1055] NGTF Press Release, "Lesbian rights proposal controversial issue at Houston's National Women's Conference." 18 November 1977. NGTF records, Box 36, File 31, CU.
[1056] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 11, "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1057] Curry and Rosenfeld (*The Washington Post*), 19 November 1977: A1, "Crucial Test for Women's Conference: Momentum in the Mainstream."

their supporters in another hall, often right next door. Sometimes both sides would turn up in the same room, arguing about who had the right to use it. Once, there was a physical confrontation between lesbian activists and a group known as the Christian Defence League, turning the conference from a rhetorical to a physical battleground.[1058]

The situation was vividly described by Schlafly in her opening speech when she said, "There are many differences between this meeting and the one in the other hall today. We started out by offering a prayer and I think you should know that at that other meeting they did not have a prayer, they just started out with a moment of silence for fear they will offend many other members who were present. I am very proud that they excluded me from that convention and I am here, where we are not ashamed and not afraid to ask God's blessing on this crowd assembled here today." She then denounced the Conference as a costly mistake at the expense of the tax-payer and characterised the state conferences which preceded it as "phoney." The whole thing, she said, was a charade "in order to pass resolutions that were pre-written and pre-packaged a year and half ago."[1059]

Already primed to be outraged by any apparent advance by homosexuals in the area of equal rights, religious right wing activists were horrified by the ebullient display of gay rights. They feared that the Conference would lead to lesbians becoming full members of society which they perceived as destructive of the American way of life.[1060] In general they were also aghast that public money was being spent on the Conference, which they saw as representing a left-wing agenda to destroy all that was good about the United States.[1061] Schlafly called the Conference the "Federal Financing of a Foolish Festival for Frustrated

[1058] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 12. "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1059] Phyllis Schlafly speaks at protests against ERA. Texas Archives of the Moving Image. Available at http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/2013_02597
[1060] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 12. "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1061] Graham (*The Washington Post*), 8 December 1977: A19, "Growing Links Between Carter and Billy Graham."

Feminists," and boldly stated that feminism was on the way out, and not relevant to the lives of most women.[1062] For women right wing evangelicals anything other than the most traditional gender and family roles – man as provider and woman as homemaker and nurturer – was abhorrent and flying in the face of what God wanted for humanity. Schlafly accused the organisers of getting up to dirty tricks to ensure that she and women like her were not represented at the conference.[1063]

Professor Charlotte Bunch, who attended the Conference, told the author that the right wing had more supporters and "they created a very menacing atmosphere… what was menacing was we were elected delegates to this conference and there were what were called at that time the three hot-button issues: abortion, the ERA and gay rights, and they gathered two or three times as many women across town in Houston to rally against essentially those three issues. There were twenty-six issues on the platform of the NWC in Houston, but these were the three issues that they were galvanised against and I think it was much more politically menacing. It wasn't yet, I don't think any of us felt personally a threat to our lives, but they did demonstrate outside the conference and they had some delegates in the conference because there were states like Mississippi, Utah and others where the right wing had successfully organised and won the delegates… On the floor of the conference we were literally fighting with them to get to the microphone all the time, so it was that kind of sense of the political menace of really the strength of their organizing women for this event." According to Professor Bunch, that was when the gay rights movement realised the strength of the right wing. Until then, they "didn't have a sense that they were going to be that strong."[1064]

[1062] Pratt Fout, 2000: 44.
[1063] Eagle Forum, June 1976: 1. Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.
[1064] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.

The Sexual Preference Plank

The chief aim of the lesbian activists was passage of the sexual preference plank, which the *New York Times* described as "the emotional focal point of the conference," and the most striking among the general public.[1065] As set out by O'Leary, the plank had three main objectives:

- That "Congress, State, and local legislatures should enact legislation to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual and affectional preference in areas including, but not limited to, employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, public facilities, government funding, and the military."
- That "State legislatures should reform their penal codes or repeal State laws that restrict private sexual behaviour between consenting adults. Removal of sodomy laws from state penal codes."
- That "State legislatures should enact legislation that would prohibit consideration of sexual or affectional orientation as a factor in any judicial determination of child custody or visitation rights. Rather, child custody cases should be evaluated solely on the merits of which party is the better parent, without regard to that person's sexual and affectional orientation."[1066]

As the time to vote neared, the balance of opinion began to swing towards the lesbian activists. The persistent attacks by the right-wingers helped to convince many feminists that they could not reject gay rights and they moved to support their lesbian sisters against the common enemy.[1067] O'Leary said, "I think, that Anita Bryant and the whole right-wing thing has pushed us over the top. It has made lesbianism a viable issue. It has made us a household

[1065] Fleming (*The New York Times*), 25 December 1977, "That week in Houston."
[1066] NGTF Press release. 21 November 1977. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 61. CU.
[1067] Komisar (*The Nation*), 10 December 1977: 625, "Feminism as National Politics."

word. What happened at the convention will have a ripple effect. We've got to take the stigma off the word 'lesbianism.'"[1068]

Before the voting, the three lesbian rights organizations which had been working together since the beginning of the conference had managed to convince the feminist delegates of the rightness of their cause and most of them supported it. Therefore, despite the presence of many very right-wing women, a majority of attendees supported the plank and endorsed equal rights for gays. A move by conservatives to separate out the lesbian "mother" segment and vote it down was easily defeated and the overall result was a massive win for the gay rights activists. When the resolution eventually passed, lesbians in the galleries roared their approval: "Thank you, sisters!" Pink and yellow helium-filled balloons were released with the message, "WE ARE EVERYWHERE."[1069]

The evangelical reaction

Passage of the sexual preference resolution outraged right-wingers and conservative Christians. Members of the all-white, all-Klan Mississippi delegation, which included six men, turned their backs on the podium and refused to be seated for a considerable period,[1070] while many state delegations brandished their yellow "Majority" ribbons.[1071] In their anger, some defeated delegates shouted and waved American flags and Bibles and scrawled messages on placards for the TV cameras, saying, "God is a Family Man," "Keep Lesbians Out of Schools" and "I Was a Fetus Once." [1072] Among the angriest of the defeated delegates, Schlafly denounced the ERA and IWY as intended to destroy the family, and she organised a

[1068] Quinn (*The Washington Post*), 23 November 1977: B1, "The Pedestal has Crashed: Pride and Paranoia in Houston Notebook."
[1069] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 12. "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1070] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 12. "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1071] Klemesrud (*The New York Times*), 21 November 1977, "A Reporter's Notebook: Symbolic Attire."
[1072] Fleming (*The New York Times*), 25 December 1977, "That week in Houston."

counter-convention across town. At the Astro-Arena, she addressed some 10,000 supporters who had been bussed in from across the nation by church and anti-abortion and stop-ERA groups.[1073] She told her audience, "We reject the antifamily goal of the ERA and the IWY. The American women do not want ERA, abortion, lesbian rights, and they do not want child care in the hands of government...[1074] the ERA will only benefit homosexuals. We reject the ERA."[1075]

The participants also watched a video address by Anita Bryant and listened to speakers who cited patriotism, the importance of traditional gender roles, and their belief that homosexuality was sinful and that "God Made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." After hearing Bryant's taped message, the crowd passed a resolution to support her.[1076] Robert Dornan, a right-wing Congressman from California, told the crowd that he had gone to the NWC as an observer and "what I saw shocked me more than anything I have ever seen. I watched three First Ladies, dressed according to White House protocol, approving a sexual perversion and the murder of unborn babies. What a disgrace… if George Washington could see those First Ladies nodding for abortion and perversion. Let's tell the President his wife was at the wrong rally . . . If you think the homosexuals, lesbians, abortionists are ready to give up you don't know about evil..."[1077] One conservative woman, Bunny Chambers, later reported that to recruit women to the religious right wing cause after the Conference, all she had to do was read them the resolutions that were passed.[1078]

For many on the evangelical right, feminists' embrace of the gay rights movement and acceptance of lesbians within their organisations was the final straw. Whereas many

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[1073] Komisar (*The Nation*), 10 December 1977: 626, "Feminism as National Politics."; Quinn (*The Washington Post*), 23 November 1977: B1, "The Pedestal has Crashed: Pride and Paranoia in Houston Notebook."
[1074] Curry (*The Washington Post*), 20 November 1977: A1, "15,000 Hold Opposition Rally."
[1075] Quinn (*The Washington Post*), 23 November 1977: B1, "The Pedestal has Crashed: Pride and Paranoia in Houston Notebook."
[1076] The *New York Times,* 20 November 1977: 32.
[1077] Quinn (*The Washington Post*), 23 November 1977: B1, "The Pedestal has Crashed: Pride and Paranoia in Houston Notebook."
[1078] Murray-Brown, 2002: 117.

conservatives had remained largely quiet on the issue of feminism earlier, "the feminist decision to ally their cause with the gay rights movement all but nixed whatever support evangelicals had for the women's liberation movement."[1079] In fact, in retrospect, the feminists' ideological embrace of the lesbian movement *was* a tactical error on their part in some ways; social conservatives would now always consider lesbianism and feminism to go hand in hand.[1080]

After the Conference

Over four days, delegates to the NWC debated and voted on twenty-six separate issues ranging over a wide expanse of causes. Not only were there the hot-button issues of the ERA, sexual preference and abortion rights, but matters of insurance, health, home-making, child care, and rights of minority women, elderly women and the disabled were tabled for decision. The resulting official report, *The Spirit of Houston*, contained the Committee's recommendations from the resolutions passed at the Conference, including that "Congress, State and Local Legislatures should enact legislation to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual and affectional preference." It also "called for feminist education in the schools," including books and curricula that would "restore to women their history and their achievements and give them knowledge and methods to reinterpret their life experiences."[1081]

In March of 1978, the report was presented "To the President, the Congress, and the People of the United States of America." A month later the National Advisory Committee for Women was established and in July 1978, Carter submitted his own recommendations based on the Committee's recommendations to Congress.[1082] One result of this was Carter's Civil

[1079] Banwart, 2013: 145.
[1080] Martin, 1996: 164.
[1081] First National Women's Conference, 1977: 89.
[1082] Barbara Jordan's keynote speech at the National Women's Conference, 18 November 1977. Texas Archives of the Moving Image. Available at: http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/2013_02597

Service Reform Act, which was passed in October 1978 and was discussed in the previous chapter. It offered homosexuals protection from discrimination in 95% of the public sector, effectively making the sexual preference plank which was passed at the Houston Conference the law of the land.

Impact of the NWC

That the NWC was a victory for the lesbian cause goes without saying. Passage of the sexual preference plank was a huge victory but what prompted greater rejoicing was the visibility which the event gave to lesbian-feminism. The activists now had an acknowledged position from which they could press their demands and respond to their conservative opponents. They developed a radical rhetoric to challenge what they saw as a heterosexual mind-set affecting the entire political scene. The White House had been sensitised to the lesbian cause and gay issues were now front-page media material. Vicki Gabriner, one of the lesbian delegates, stated after the Conference: "There is no doubt that we won a victory."[1083] Nancy Higgins, one of the lesbian rights activists who participated in the Conference, told the author, "It was the first time ever that lesbian rights were discussed at a national level and the most amazing thing was that the whole country was watching!"[1084]

The lesbian victory was particularly significant since it was achieved against a formidable and numerically greater opposition by conservative women. Jeanne Cordova, a prominent lesbian rights activist, declared, "For lesbians, the significance of what happened in Houston stretches far beyond a report that goes to Congress and the President and may or may not get acted upon piecemeal over the next century. Houston did what Bryant, the Gay Movement and the Women's Movement couldn't do for lesbians. It said the word lesbian

[1083] Gabriner (*Atalanta*), no. 12 (December 1977): 12. "International Women's Year: 'Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?'" Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1084] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 22 June 2016.

loud and clear over the front pages of most major newspapers in this country."[1085] Lucia Valeska, NGTF's co-executive director, said about the NWC, "I saw the Women's Caucus of NGTF pull off the sexual preference resolution and make it happen in what was, previous to this, a hostile environment, and I was impressed. I saw lesbian feminists now doing the basic groundwork — not radical but necessary work — that has to be done for the success of the lesbian feminist movement."[1086]

Professor Doreen Mattingly told the author that apart from lesbian visibility and the passage of the gay rights plank, the NWC threw light on lesbianism and its activists within the feminist movement itself, which at that point was divided over the issue. She said the Conference offered visibility "for Jean O'Leary and for a lot of people there, visibility within the movement… I think a lot of lesbian feminists saw it as a coming of age of lesbian rights, and as a fundamental feminist issue, which certainly there had been debate about before."[1087]

A major lesson which the lesbian activists learned from the NWC concerned the importance of mobilisation and coalition-building. The Conference showed that by getting organised, lesbian women could command a strong voice which could be heard even at the national level, giving more power to the movement. Just a few months later, in March 1978 in Los Angeles, lesbian activists decided to form the National Lesbian Feminist Organization.[1088] It was at the NWC that three gay rights organizations co-operated for the first time in search of a common goal. Of equal importance was the co-operation between lesbian activists and feminist activists. It was this link that got the sexual preferences plank through, despite conservative delegates outnumbering lesbians by two to one.

Vicky Gabriner highlighted the success achieved by coalition-building among diverse ranks of women, namely removal of the invisibility that had covered lesbians in society and

[1085] Cordova (*Lesbian Tide*), January/February 1978: 10, "Those Lesbians Are Everywhere."
[1086] *Lesbian Tide*, July/August 1979: 14, "NGTF Names Feminist-Lucia Valeska."
[1087] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[1088] McDonald (*Lesbian Tide*), May/June 1978: 18, "National Lesbian Organization Born."

in women's movements alike. She said, "For the first time, a diverse coalition of women, not all of whom define themselves as women's liberationists, resoundingly affirmed the rights of lesbians and recognized it as a feminist issue." The effect, she concluded, was to take "several steps out of the closet."[1089] In the view of the *Washington Post,* the Conference produced two significant results: the establishment of a place for women in mainstream politics and the positioning of lesbian and gay rights front and centre of American society.[1090]

In terms of American political life, the NWC proved to be something of a flashpoint between conservatism and progressivism, with many on the right wing seeing social movements such as feminism and gay rights activism as part of the same general tendency towards the destabilisation of what they believed to be the true American family and the bedrock of American civilisation. In retrospect, it can be recognised as a pivotal moment in America's "culture wars" and see that it very much set the scene for the WHCF, which followed it.

Reflecting on the NWC, a prominent member of the evangelical right, James Dobson, said: "we can thank President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, for turning that government-sponsored event over to the likes of Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Jane Fonda, and Betty Friedan. Watching them on television as they ripped into everything I believed actually motivated me to join the pro-family movement. When President Carter announced his follow-up WHCF two years later, I said to myself, 'Not this time, sir. Not this time!'"[1091]

Carter's Role and Contribution

Although Carter deliberately avoided participating in the NWC, his role in enhancing the lesbian presence, visibility and goals is indisputable. It was he who appointed Bella Abzug as

[1089] Gabriner (*Pointblank Times*), 1 January 1978: 7. "IWY Conference: A Woman's Reaction," 17. Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, SBC, DUSCL.
[1090] Broder (*The Washington Post*) 23 November 1977: A17, "The Real Significance of Houston."
[1091] Stasson, 2014: 208.

Chair of the Committee of the Conference upon Costanza's recommendation, a move which caused much dismay among conservative Christians. He appointed Jean O'Leary to the Committee, too, another highly significant appointment, since she was a well-known feminist and one of the best-known directors of the NGTF. Indeed, Carter accepted all of Costanza's Committee recommendations, including that of Ruth Abram, another feminist and board member of the NGTF. The new slate was significantly more diverse and progressive than its predecessor appointed by President Ford. It is in the highest degree unlikely that the newly enhanced lesbian presence and the passage of the sexual preference plank would have been achieved without Carter's appointees in place. There can be little doubt that a more conservative Committee would have rejected the new lesbian visibility and activists' demands at a state-funded Conference.

Professor Bunch highlighted the huge difference between Ford's and Carter's committees and the role that Carter's appointments played in a NGTF newsletter: "the first IWY national commission appointed by President Ford offered us little hope. While a few individuals were responsive to our concerns, the commission clearly did not intend to include lesbianism in its deliberations. The appointment of a new commission by President Carter in March 1977 brought some important changes. The Carter Commission, with Bella Abzug as chair, had a stronger feminist presence, including women such as Gloria Steinem, Ellie Smeal, Millie Jeffries, Ruth Abram, Koryne Horbal... Jean O'Leary."[1092]

The NGTF also acknowledged Carter's contribution, stating, "Thanks in considerable measure to President Carter's appointment of Jean (O'Leary) as one of the select group of commissioners of IWY, the high point of the past months was undoubtedly the major role played by NGTF in so successfully mobilizing lesbian visibility and passage of the 'lesbian'

[1092] Charlotte Bunch in It's Time: Newsletter of the NGTF. November 1977, "Lesbian Rights: A Feminist Issue." Box: 147, Folder 2. CU.

resolution at the IWY convocation at Houston. The press visibility to the issue, for lesbians (and thence the gay movement), and the rallying of a huge majority of non-gay women to our cause, indeed even Betty Friedan, marks the changeover from just feminist leadership support for the gay cause to a solid grassroots backing."[1093]

Nancy Higgins told the author, "There is no doubt that without Abzug's and O'Leary's presence and a lesbian-friendly (Women's) Committee, things would have been very different. Can you imagine what would have happened if the chair and the Committee were conservative women? We would not even have been allowed in the Conference hall, as had happened to other events before! Certainly, Carter deserves credit for making appointments which were friendly and supportive to our cause."[1094]

Professor Mattingly, in a personal interview, also highlighted the importance of Carter's appointments, arguing that the sexual preference plank would "certainly not (have passed) without Jean O'Leary. Her inclusion was vital, but also, I think what would have happened if there were any weaker leaders, any less feminist leaders, the Conference would have been derailed by the conservative anti-feminist women, many of whom were elected delegates in states like Utah, and who were also protesting outside the conference."[1095]

THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON FAMILIES

During his 1976 Presidential campaign, Carter had promised that, were he elected, he would convene a "White House Conference on the American Family" in order "to help stimulate a national discussion of the state of American families." Its purpose would be to unite people from diverse backgrounds, including "government leaders, representatives of family-related professions, and ordinary citizens and parents" so that they could discuss how families could

[1093] NGTF minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee, 13 August 1977. NGTF records, Box 2, Folder 60. CU.
[1094] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 22 June 2016.
[1095] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.

be supported and strengthened, and "restore the public-private partnership in social services that has been so hampered by Republican neglect."[1096] He had stated his view that the government currently had no real policy on the family at all, that the level of family breakdown in American had reached "dangerous proportions" and that it was the role of government to do everything it could to "support and strengthen the American family."[1097]

Carter had made it more than clear that he held the "American family" in huge esteem, saying that "the entire history of the human race teaches us that the family unit is the best way to raise children, and the only solid foundation on which to build a strong nation." Carter also hoped to use his family-friendly message to appeal to non-evangelical Christians and in August 1976 had appointed as a special advisor on family matters Joseph Califano, a well-known Roman Catholic.[1098] Carter stated his view that the government should adopt a strategy that would keep "government programming to a minimum" while restoring trust and confidence to the families of America.[1099]

Carter had promised to hold the Conference shortly after his election but, in the event, more immediately pressing issues, including job creation, ongoing problems in the Middle East and inflation, stood in the way. However, he held seven issues, including importantly "family," as priorities. The others were peace, a strong national defence, human rights, inflation, bureaucracy and partnership.[1100] He eventually announced in January 1978 that the WHCF would be held in December, 1979, towards the end of his Presidential term. In his statement, announcing the conference, Carter said: "the main purpose of this White House Conference will be to examine the strengths of American families, the difficulties they face, and the ways in which family life is affected by public policies. The Conference will examine

[1096] White House Conference on Families Statement Announcing the Conference. 30 January 1978. Folder IWY- 3/77-3/78, Box 132. JCPL.
[1097] Antler (*Social Thought*), 1978, "Family Policy and the Carter Administration." Box 36, Folder 61. CU.
[1098] Ribuffo, 2006: 320.
[1099] Califano, 1976.
[1100] Carter's list of priorities. 23 May 1978. Rafsoon files, Box 31. JCPL.

the important effects that the world of work, the mass media, the court system, private institutions, and other major facets of our society have on American families. This Conference will clearly recognize the pluralism of family life in America. The widely differing regional, religious, cultural, and ethnic heritages of our country affect family life and contribute to its diversity and strength. Families also differ in age and composition. There are families in which several generations live together, families with two parents or one, and families with or without children. The Conference will respect this diversity."[1101]

However, December 1979 in Washington came and went with no sign of the promised conference. Patsy Fleming, a divorcee, was named as executive director and this prompted widespread criticism from Catholics. Then the chairman, Wilbur J. Cohen resigned, claiming ill-health, and Fleming, too, stood down rather than take a co-chairman. There were fears in the White House that a December 1979 conference would provoke pre-election conflicts about abortion and homosexuality and possibly prompt calls for more public aid for parochial schools. Facing additional organisational problems, the conference was postponed. Fears that this actually meant cancellation were allayed when a new format was announced. Instead of a single, 1,500-person gathering, there would be three or four regional meetings in the summer of 1980. Such a formula would hopefully dilute the effects of a conflict concentrated in a single arena. There was also a belief by some that any possibly embarrassing recommendation by a particular conference would not be absolute.[1102] Carter then appointed Jim Guy Tucker, a former Congressman from Arkansas, as Chair of the

[1101] Press Office, White House Conference on Families Statement Announcing the Conference, 30 January 1978. Records of the White House Press Office (Carter Administration), 1977 – 1981, White House Conference on Families container. JCPL.
[1102] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 21 August 1979: A3, "Old Conflicts Buttoned Down, Family Conference Looking up."

Conference, and John Carr as the Executive Director. Although Tucker's wife was herself a divorcee, their nuclear family unit was more acceptable to religious conservatives.[1103]

Carr felt strongly that the Conference should be "decentralised" so rather than having it in one central venue, three venues – Baltimore, Minneapolis and Los Angeles – were selected to facilitate those who had to travel to attend. Despite fears among some elements of the religious right wing, considerable effort went into ensuring that the conference represented Americans from all walks of life and political persuasions, with open process for selection, including public balloting and selection at random. Ultimately, 500 state forums were held, and 125,000 people voted for 2,000 delegates, who would attend the three major regional meetings. They were represented as follows: 60% women, 14% African Americans and 7.3% Hispanics.[1104] Of the 2,000 delegates, some 250 were theologically conservative Christians.[1105]

The expressed goals of the conference were various, including examining the impact of the economic situation on families, to encourage pro-family activities at grassroots level and to recommend public policies that would be good for families. A National Advisory Committee was set up, with "21 men and 19 women, ages 18 to 66, while there was no specific mention of families containing homosexuals, representing diverse racial, ethnic and political backgrounds."[1106] One of the conference themes proposed by the National Advisory Committee on the WHCF can easily be read as a veiled allusion to families with homosexuals and other minority family types: "American families are pluralistic in nature. Our discussion

[1103] Wilkins (*The New York Times*), 19 June 1978: NJ13. "US Family Conference Delayed Amid Disputes and Resignations."
[1104] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14. CU.
[1105] Ribuffo, 2006: 326.
[1106] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.

of issues will reflect an understanding and respect of cultural, ethnic and regional differences as well as differences in structure and lifestyles."[1107]

A wide range of bodies was quick to jump on board the train; every demographic represented in the US seemed to have a stake in the WHCF. For instance, a joint memo of the American Association of Marriage and Family Counsellors, the American Home Economics Association, the Family Service Association of America and the National Council of Family Relations, mentioned the need of protection for "paperless" families, which they identified as primarily heterosexual, to be recognised in public family policy, although it mentioned the WHCF only briefly.[1108]

The NGTF quickly identified the WHCF as an important opportunity to make their voices heard. As early as 1978, they had started working on how they could be involved, beginning by drafting a definition of family that would include the many American families in which at least one member was homosexual:

It seems to us that the notion of family includes two basic human needs:

- "The need of each individual to share love and caring with other human beings and to take responsibility in other people's lives and
- The need for children to depend on adults in their formative years, not only for their safety and survival, but for the experience, love and caring that will enable them to make rewarding relationships with other human beings as independent adults. We believe that a working definition of "family" is any constellation of two or more individuals which meets one or both of these basic family needs."[1109]

Having started with this attempt to posit a broad definition of the family, the NGTF got relatively quickly to the meat of the matter: "From our perspective, one essential policy

[1107] WHCF, goals as expressed by the National Advisory Committee. NGTF records, Box 141, Folder 40, CU.
[1108] COFO Memorandum. NGTF records, Box 141, Folder 40, CU.
[1109] Testimony from the NGTF, Hearings on the 1979 WHCF, Senate Subcommittee of Human Development, January, 1978. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 5, CU.

direction must be to end prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men in every area of our society, and recognition that neither is representing 'a threat to family life,' we are part of the American family, no matter how it is defined."[1110]

The NGTF argued that the only way to truly support the American family *in toto* would be to also support American homosexuals without any form of prejudice. This was not a message that everyone would be prepared to take on board. The NGTF went on to make a direct appeal to President Carter, asking him to make the legislative changes that they felt would make a tangible improvement to their situation: "President Carter has stated his intention to eliminate all forms of Federal discrimination based on sexual orientation [an earlier version of the text used the word "preference" here, hinting at a nature versus nurture debate that was still ongoing within the ranks of the gay rights movement], but if our families are to be supported and strengthened, we believe that Federal policy must be directed toward elimination of discrimination all along the line. This includes passage of Federal civil-rights legislation, removal of directly discriminatory policies as the recent exclusion of gay families from federally subsidized housing, equal access of gay couples to credit and insurance, adjustment of the tax structure so that we may declare members of our families as dependents, and the affirmation of such basic human rights as the right to visit our loved ones in hospitals when they are ill."[1111]

Controversy from the Start

The idea of having a Conference on the American family had probably seemed like a relatively uncontroversial idea when it was first mooted – after all, who *wasn't* in favour of the American family? – but it was quickly evident that it was likely to be a highly contentious

[1110] Testimony from the NGTF, Hearings on the 1979 WHCF, Senate Subcommittee of Human Development, January, 1978. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 5, CU.
[1111]Testimony from the NGTF, Hearings on the 1979 WHCF, Senate Subcommittee of Human Development, January, 1978. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 5, CU.

conference and a flashpoint for the culture war that was steadily heating up. Carter had hoped that the conference would help to cement support for him among evangelical Christians, who were perennially concerned about the state of the family, and who were outraged when it became apparent that Carter did not intend to take measures that would exclude homosexuals from the event.

There was some talk of postponing the final session of the WHCF until late 1980, but in November 1979, Stuart Eizenstat, while conceding a "flawed beginning," expressed the belief that it was then turning out to be a success.[1112] What's more, the conference would be a plus for Carter in an election year while postponement would be expensive. Carter had already expressed his personal support by promising that the WHCF would not end up as a quickly forgotten government report.[1113] While planning for the conference was still in a relatively early stage, the White House commissioned Gallup to carry out a survey into the status of American families.[1114]

In January 1980, the *New York Times* was already able to run an article headlined "White House Conference on Families: A Schism Develops." The article discussed the increasingly organised efforts of the religious right to be well represented and the fact that one hundred and fifty organisations, including the Moral Majority, had come together to fight their corner.[1115] Dobson who had been so horrified by the Women's Conference, was invited to attend the WHCF after the White House received about 80,000 letters from his supporters, insisting that he take part. Tucker invited Dobson to address a pre-conference event on the subject of child development.[1116] Part of the right-wing pressure was a demand that gay couples be banned from the conference. D. Michael Lindsay told the author that "a number of

[1112] Stuart Eizenstat to Fran Voorde, 5 November 1979. Folder TR 96, 1/20/77–1/20/81, Box TR 33. JCPL.
[1113] Stuart Eizenstat to Fran Voorde, 5 November 1979. Folder TR 96, 1/20/77–1/20/81, Box TR 33. JCPL.
[1114] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s, Box 142, Folder 14, p 88. CU.
[1115] Brozan (*The New York Times*), 1 January 1980. "Carter, Opening Family Conference, Calls for Creative Solutions: The Economy is a Problem."
[1116] Diamond, 1989: 31-2; Gilgoff, 2007: 31.

prominent evangelical leaders did visit the President in advance of the conference urging him not to allow gay couples to be a part of the conference."[1117]

As early as January, the Coalition for the WHCF had received a letter warning that certain religious right wing groups had the potential to completely derail the event. The letter said, in part: "The tactics and militancy of 'new religious right' groups in recent months is a threat to the original interest and ultimate success of the WHCF… some groups have seen the Conference as an opportunity to launch an all-out attack on government social welfare programs. This tactic and militancy on the state level has succeeded in almost capturing of [sic] two delegates in two of these states that have held preliminary state conferences and threaten other state conferences."[1118]

The evangelical right believed very sincerely that the Conference was, in fact, to be rigged against them, with a selection process[1119] that explicitly favoured liberals. From their point of view, all they were doing was trying to even the score – and they felt that this was hugely important as most of them tended to agree with the fundamentalist Beverly LaHaye of Concerned Women of America, who had said that the WHCF intended to change the definition of the family, "to legitimate divorce, out-of-wedlock births, and homosexuality."[1120]

Schlafly arranged for her husband to file a lawsuit against the National Committee for the conference, claiming that it was going to use federal funds to lobby for interest groups.[1121]

[1117] D. Michael Lindsay in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.
[1118] Letter from unidentified writer to John Carr, Executive Director of the WHCF, 31 January 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14. CU.
[1119] In some areas, the selection process seems to have been mired in a lack of organisation that could lead to delegates being far from representative of their constituencies. In Washington DC, for example, the eight delegates who were elected (30% of the delegates had to be selected by election) were all Catholic, despite the fact that only 13% of the residents were. The reason given for this at local level was the fact that Catholic community had rallied around the idea of opposing delegates whom they saw to be anti-family. One delegate, a local priest, had run because of his congregation's horror when they heard that gay activists proposed to moot the idea of a gay family unit at the conference (Cook and Ennis, (*The Washington Post*), 3 March 1980: DC1, "Poor Planning, Confusion, Hit Family Conference.")
[1120] Ribuffo, 2006: 325.
[1121] Murray-Brown, 2002: 108.

From the Moral Majority came a call for a state boycott of the Conference on grounds that it was "stacked against family life." The organisation set out what it believed would be targeted at the conference, namely the right of parents to spank their children, and the Moral Majority's opposition to the drafting of women and to the provision of welfare to those who would not work.[1122] The Southern Baptist Church passed a resolution stating that the conference represented "an undermining of the biblical concept of family."[1123] Dobson proposed a write-in campaign by his followers to secure him a place on the Conference Advisory Board. The idea failed when fewer than thirty letters arrived at the White House.[1124]

Hackles were raised in various quarters at the apparent attempt by elements of the religious right wing to hijack the Conference and use it for their own ends. For instance, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), a largely liberal group, warned its members that the "new right" was attempting to "take over" and oppose measures including the ERA.[1125] The NCJW also pointed out that, as of January 1980 the religious right wing had already managed to dominate the Conference in Virginia and Oklahoma and urged members of the NCJW to do what they could to counter them.[1126] In fact, in Virginia delegates from the religious right had managed to elect twenty-two of the total of twenty-four of the state's representatives.[1127] The organisation also contacted Carter directly to warn him that the Conference was in danger of being taken over by the religious right wing, which had already gained considerable ground in a growing number of states.[1128]

[1122] Turner (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1979, "Group of Evangelical Protestants Takes Over the GOP in Alaska."
[1123] Phillips, 2006: 185.
[1124] Several letters in James Dobson folder. JCPL.
[1125] Letter from Shirley I. Leviton, National President to members of the NCJW, 7 February 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.
[1126] Letter from Lenore Feldman, Chairwoman, et al State Public Affairs Chairwoman, 7 February 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.
[1127] Dewar (*The Washington Post*), 18 June 1980: A2. "Conference on the Family is Rallying 'new right' Activists."
[1128] Press Release from the NCJW, 23 January 1980, Robert Malson's Subject File, (Gay) Homosexuals, (6/1/80-10/10/80), 06/01/1980 - 10/10/1980. JCPL.

Gay rights activists were determined to be part of the conference, and mobilised efforts to ensure that they would be well represented. This was an important occasion to present themselves as part of the mainstream of the melting pot of American society, and not just a fringe group that was very much apart. On May 29, 1979, the American Civil Liberties Union wrote to Tucker stressing the need for "at least one person representing same sex families" and stating the plight of homosexual parents as follows: "there is substantial prejudice against gay parents. We at the American Civil Liberties Union have been involved in more than a few cases in recent years where custody of children was being contested in court solely on the grounds that a homosexual parent was intrinsically unfit."[1129]

On August 22, 1979, Lucia Velaska and Charles Brydon of the NGTF wrote to members of their organisation with an interest in the WHCF urging them to contact conference coordinators in their state to ensure that homosexuals were properly represented.[1130] The same day, they wrote to the delegates of the coalition for the WHCF and pointed out that they were not being treated the same way as other would-be participants in the conference process, but were being singled out and asked to jump through additional hoops in order to justify their presence: "We have asked to make a presentation to the state-conference directors on the need for gay-family participation, and we've been told it wouldn't be right to 'single us out.' Our response has been that we are presently being singled out for exclusion and that such a presentation is necessary if gay delegates are to be included at a state level."[1131]

Also the same day, Velaska and Brydon wrote to all their state contacts with an interest in the WHCF, urging them to make it very clear to state coordinators that they

[1129] Letter from Ira Glasser for the ACLU to Jim Guy Tucker, 29 May 1979. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 5, CU.
[1130] Letter from Velaska and Brydon of the NGTF to NGTF state contacts for the National Conference on Families, 22 August 1979. NGTF records, Box 141, Folder 43, CU.
[1131] Letter from Velaska and Brydon of the NGTF to delegates to the coalition for the WHCF, 22 August 1979. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.

expected them to arrange for gay delegates to participate.[1132] Again on the same day, Velaska and Brydon wrote to members of the advisory committee, reminding them of their first meeting at which they had discussed the need to include poor families, as well as members of various other groups that often did not get the chance to engage with government. Apparently, despite the fact that one delegate had proposed the inclusion of homosexuals, the committee had managed to slide away from the topic and ultimately did not include gay families, despite having been petitioned by numerous organisations to do so. Clearly frustrated by the ongoing exclusion of homosexuals from the proceedings, they wrote (and underlined the text for the sake of emphasis): "we do not intend to remain invisible. We will demand the right to open participation in deliberations that affect our lives. We will seek representation, according to our numbers in this society, at the state and regional family conferences."[1133]

Carter went to great effort to ensure that the conference would represent the huge diversity of America in the 1970s, overlooking the fact that for many of the religious right wing there really was very little to debate at all. In fact, the very word "diversity" was a red rag to the conservatives, who felt that it was a code word for homosexuals.[1134] For conservative, "pro-family" delegates, the conference was an important opportunity to voice their objection to "the ERA, abortion, gay rights, pornography, limiting government involvement with the family."[1135]

An early campaigner on the side of the right wing evangelicals was Connie Marshner, a conservative activist and director of the Family Policy Division of the Free Congress Foundation, who had already had considerable success in coordinating grassroots movements

[1132] Letter from Velaska and Brydon of the NGTF to state contacts, 22 August 1979. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.
[1133] Letter from Velaska and Brydon of the NGTF to members of the National Advisory Committee of the NGTF, 22 August 1979. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.
[1134] Murray Brown, 2002: 144.
[1135] Martin, 1996: 177.

of conservatives, largely composed of "little clusters of evangelical and fundamentalist Moms' groups." Marshner had sent out a newsletter, the *Family Protection Report*, which she used to reach out to this increasingly politicised constituency. When the WHCF was announced, she and her associates urged the members of their network to get involved.[1136] Together with other conservatives, including Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation, Onalee McGraw of the Heritage Foundation, and Bob Billings of the Moral Majority, she was involved in trying to bring the various strands of the evangelical right together to form a coherent group.[1137] Marshner and her network worked hard to acquire as many spots for the evangelical right as possible and were initially very successful.[1138]

Prior to the major conferences, each state chose delegates at pre-arranged hearings, some 70 per cent being appointed by governors and a national advisory committee, with the remaining 30 per cent elected at state meetings. Efforts were made to ensure a broad representation of society, thus delegates included people from poor families, ethnic minorities, the handicapped and single parents.[1139] In response to the success of the religious right in rallying delegates, several state governors took measures to include greater numbers of progressives, leading many conservatives to complain that the deck was being stacked against them.[1140]

Right wing evangelicals were clear that, among the forces they were opposing was Carter himself, who had already made it clear that his view of "family" went far beyond that of just the traditional white model. In 1979, at the start of National Family Week, Carter had said: "we are a nation of families. All families are important, but the extended family, the

[1136] Martin, 1996: 175.
[1137] Ribuffo, 2007: 325.
[1138] Martin, 1996: 176.
[1139] Vandenmark (*The Associated Press*), 21 June 1980, "Abortion Fight Looms in Family Conference."
[1140] Hogue, 2012: 161.

foster family, and the adoptive family play a special role by relieving the isolation of those who lack the comfort of a loving nuclear family."[1141]

Economic issues rather than gay concerns topped the agenda at most state conventions, with the spotlight turned on areas such as job creation, assistance for the workless, flexitime and the problem of violence in the home.[1142] Because they concentrated on such workaday issues, along with the ERA, White House staffers were unprepared when many of the conferences became contentious and argumentative.[1143] In Atlanta, Georgia, for example, a conference was held, after which delegates were chosen. The conference had not even been advertised to potential liberal participants, some of whom were only made aware of it by the NGTF. In this exceptionally hostile environment, the few gay rights issues that were raised were met with heckles and booing.[1144] It was nonetheless resolved in November 1979 that homosexuals should be included within the definition of the family, but when the proceedings of the conference were released on May 5, 1980, this definition was excluded.[1145]

It turned out that the definition had been excluded by the Governor of the state because homosexuality remained illegal in Georgia.[1146] In response to a letter written by Dianne Stephenson, Executive Director of Atlanta Gay Centre, the Governor replied, tersely, that: "Sodomy and homosexual marriages are illegal in Georgia. A recommendation of this nature is unacceptable and I will not allow it to be included in our recommendations. It was my decision not to include any reference to homosexuality in our recommendations solely because of the reasons I have just stated. Until such time as homosexuality and sodomy are

[1141] Martin, 1996: 177-8.
[1142] Stuart Eizenstat to the President, 31 May 1980, Folder TR 96, 1/20/77–1/20/81, Box TR 33, WHCF. JCPL.
[1143] Stuart Eizenstat to Jim Guy Tucker and John L. Carr, 31 December 1980, John Carr Folder. JCPL.
[1144] Report from Bobbie Weinstock to the NGTF, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1145] Letter from Dianne D. Stephenson, Executive Director of Atlanta Gay Centre, to Randy Humphrey, state coordinator of the White House Conference on Families, 23 May 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1146] Press Release from Atlanta Gay Centre, 2 June 1980, 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.

recognized legally as acceptable behaviours, Georgia will not condone these practices. In making the 25 appointments of delegates… I have tried to select people who are respected in their communities and who would represent our State and the families in our State in the most respectable fashion possible in Baltimore this summer."[1147]

It seems surprising that the idea that homosexuals could be included within the definition of family was ever mooted, as eyewitness reports of the conference describe a very organised religious right wing contingent that was extremely hostile to a wide range of liberal issues, and it had even been suggested by one delegate that science should not be taught in schools, "because so much science is anti-religion."[1148] Even in liberal New York the literature published ahead of the state conference at which delegates would be chosen made no explicit reference to homosexuals in the context of family, mentioning only the fact that there had been a change in "non-traditional family patterns," such as "unmarried couples living together" and "group or communal living arrangements."[1149]

Even before the conference started, everyone involved had run into an extremely fundamental dilemma: there was no consensus on what the word "family" meant, a problem that had not even occurred to Carter as a possibility. Furthermore, this lack of consensus was experienced by many, especially on the religious right, as an attack on values that they held very dear personally and that they sincerely believed were hugely important for the well-being of the American nation.

In an interview given on Father's Day in 1977 Carter stated in a straightforward manner that "I don't see homosexuality as a threat to the family." However, the context of his comment offers some less encouraging insight. He said: "I don't see homosexuality as a

[1147] Letter from Governor George Busbee to Dianne M Stephenson, 29 May 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1148] State of New York, Governor's Conference on Families. January-February 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.
[1149] State of New York, Governor's Conference on Families. January-February 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, CU.

threat to the family… I don't feel that it is a normal interrelationship, but at the same time I don't think that society, through its laws, ought to abuse or harass the homosexual. I think it is one of those things that is not accepted by most Americans as a normal sexual relationship. In my mind it is certainly not a substitute for the family life that I described to you… I don't see the need to change the laws to permit homosexuals to marry. I know that there are homosexuals who teach and the children don't suffer…"[1150]

Making matters worse, Carter apparently intended to refer to "unconventional" families, presumably meaning those with homosexual parents, during a speech at the White House reception of the WHCF on July 20, 1979, when he said: "We often feel nostalgic about a past that seems to be simpler and sometimes seems to be better, and we can learn from the past, but we must not limit our vision of what a good family is just to what a family was in the past. Instead, we must find meaning in today's challenges, and today's realities, which we cannot change, honestly, creatively, with courage and with compassion… Families, as you well know, are more than just households. They are a network of relationships rooted not just in kinship based on blood, but a kinship based on shared experiences, shared joys and sorrows, and I think most of all, in shared love that crosses vast distances and also crosses very easily the barrier of generations."[1151]

In a personal interview, Tony Campolo recalled that at the state conferences "the primary problem was that there was no clear definition of what a family was or is, and such questions were raised as, 'Is a single mother raising children that were born out of wedlock a family?' There was a time when that was not considered a family. Were gay couples who were committed to one another and living with each other, along with any children within the household, to be considered a family? There were radical feminists at that gathering who

[1150] *Chicago Sun Times,* 19 June 1977. "Carter hopes to give US families a Break." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1151] Remarks of the President at Reception for the White House Conference on Families. n.d. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 5, CU.

raised the question as to whether or not traditional family structures were oppressive institutions in which women were oppressed and had their identities crushed. It could be said that at that conference, instead of revitalizing traditional families, they came under severe attack."[1152]

Ahead of the first conference, controversy arose over whether Carter should deliver the keynote speech. Tucker asked Carter to do so,[1153] but many of his associates disagreed. They did not want to risk Carter being caught up in the acrimonious disputes between conservative and liberal Christians over such issues as abortion and gay rights. Against this, Stuart Eizenstat argued that a non-appearance would suggest cowardice on Carter's part, while his presence would signal his support for a strong family life. Moreover, this was a gathering which he had himself proposed. What Eizenstat got wrong, basing his view on the small turnout of pickets on pro-life/pro-choice and gay rights issues, was his belief that the state conventions would concentrate on economic issues.[1154]

Three days before the opening of the Conference, Carter declared that he would participate.[1155] The announcement came on the same day that a Gallup poll, commissioned by the White House, was released, revealing a downbeat perception of family life in America. Nearly half of the respondents expressed the belief that family life had deteriorated in the past fifteen years.[1156] The causes suggested ranged from increased divorce rates, lack of jobs for young people leading to their involvement in crime and violence, abuse of spouses and children, alcoholism and drug addiction.[1157] Publication of the poll made the Conference more significant than ever.

[1152] Tony Campolo in a personal interview, 30 April 2014.
[1153] Memo of Jim Guy Tucker to Carter, 11 March 1980, Folder TR 96 1/20/77–1/20/81, Box TR 33, WHCF. JCPL.
[1154] Memo of Stuart Eizenstat to Carter, 31 May 1980, Folder TR 96 1/20/77–1/20/81, Box TR 33, WHCF. JCPL.
[1155] *The New York Times*, 3 June 1980, "Carter Is to Travel to Baltimore For Family Conference Thursday."
[1156] *The New York Times*, 3 June 1980, "Poll Finds People Feel Family Life On Decline; Survey for Conference Family Abuse Is Cited."
[1157] Cohn (*The New York Times*), 3 June 1980: A1, "Americans Favor Extensive Aid to Buttress Families."

The depth of hostility to Carter among right-wing evangelicals was demonstrated just before the opening of the Conference at a press conference held jointly by Weyrich and Marshner. Both described Carter's record on family issues as "abysmal," while Weyrich accused Carter of having "the worst record for family issues of any president in history."[1158] They accused him of stacking the conference in his favour and claimed Tucker had manipulated delegate selection to ensure that policies which Weyrich favoured would be excluded. For the record, he outlined these as barring abortion, supporting prayer in schools, opposing employment of homosexuals in public positions and defining the family as persons who are related (thus excluding homosexuals). The Weyrich-Marshner alliance announced that it would hold its own conference, the American Family Forum, in Washington, June 30-July 2.[1159]

In reaction to the Weyrich/Marshner alliance, yet another group, the Coalition for the White House Conference on Families was founded. It was an umbrella organisation for middle-of-the-road and liberal opinion, and participant members included the US Catholic Conference, the American Public Welfare Association, the National Urban League, the National Council of Jewish Women and other church and welfare bodies. At their press conference, they made clear that they would oppose the Weyrich/Marshner proposals.[1160]

THE CONFERENCES TAKE PLACE

Baltimore (5-7 June 1980)

The first Conference opened as scheduled on June 5, 1980 in Baltimore and lasted three days. Taking part were 671 delegates.[1161] Carter opened proceedings with a deftly crafted speech

[1158] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 6 June 1980: A2, "Carter Opens Conference on Families."
[1159] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 6 June 1980: A2, "Carter Opens Conference on Families."
[1160] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 6 June 1980: A2, "Carter Opens Conference on Families."
[1161] Brozan (*The New York Times*), 7 June 1980: 46, "2nd Day of Family Conference: Workshops and a Walkout; 'I Am a Christian' Broad Range of Issues"; Vandenmark (*The Associated Press*), 21 June 1980, "Abortion Fight Looms in Family Conference."

designed to appeal to all sides, but ran into trouble when he sought to widen the definition of the family. Starting jokily, he said, "I am very pleased to see that there is no violence in the audience or on the outside of the assembly area."[1162] He then lauded the diversity and solidarity to be found among families, including his own, noted the progress made in the battle for racial and gender equality, and applauded single parents struggling to manage. Seeking to embrace both conservatives and progressives, he portrayed the family as the product of thousands of years of human experience and as an institution supported by traditions, including the Judaeo-Christian tradition. However, opposition arose when he suggested that family ties were "based on more than blood kinship," that government should stay out of family life, including the bedroom, and that there was no such thing as a standard perfect family.[1163]

Hard-line evangelicals interpreted these remarks as a sop to homosexuals and accused him of organising the conferences with the aim of improving his chances of re-election. All the grandstanding by the evangelical right at the Baltimore conference was a significant rallying call for gay rights activists. The NGTF had requested a spot on the National Advisory Committee and, while this had not been granted, the organization was represented at the Conference, and as in Houston, its presence was highly visible. Although only seven of 671 delegates were openly gay at the beginning of the conference,[1164] as many as thirty "came out" during the course of the conference.[1165] They received the support of various participating organisations, including the National Organization for Women, the Black Caucus, and various other groups not specifically aligned with their cause.[1166] The NGTF

[1162] Press Release, Remarks of the President to the White House Conference on Families. 5 June 1980, Folder White House Conference on Families, Box 70. JCPL.
[1163] Press Release, Remarks of the President to the White House Conference on Families. 5 June 1980, Folder White House Conference on Families, Box 70. JCPL.
[1164] *GCN*, 6 December 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1165] *The Blade*, 12 June 1980: A22, "Family Conference Results."
[1166] It's Time: The Newsletter of the NGTF, 1 July 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70. CU.

immediately made its position known by submitting a recommendation to end discrimination on the basis of sexual preference.[1167]

The conference debated hundreds of proposals and on many, such as ways to combat drink and drug abuse and means to care for the elderly in their homes, there was wide agreement. Joseph Giordano of the Coalition for the White House Conference on Families urged delegates to keep issues such as gay rights and abortion in perspective. However, his advice went by the board when provocative topics such as alternative family structures came up for debate.[1168]

As in Houston, tempers flared and neither the progressive activists, including gay rights proponents, nor the religious right wing activists behaved particularly well.[1169] Marshner and her allies attempted to raise the issues of abortion and homosexuality in every workshop, regardless of how relevant the topics were. Workshop leaders, prepared for this, had been instructed to act strongly to limit discussion to the matters at hand, infuriating the Marshner crowd.[1170] After just one day of meetings, Marshner complained about the way the Conference was being run and reaffirmed her view that: "Families consist of people related by heterosexual marriage, blood, and adoption. Families are not religious cults, families are not Manson families [referring to the infamous commune led by Charles Manson in the late 1960s], families are not heterosexual or homosexual liaisons outside marriage."[1171]

Early work at the conference saw the drafting of one pro-gay proposal after another followed by the rejection of one pro-gay proposal after another. Nevertheless, in the long run, it was the conservatives who lost most heavily, prompting walkouts and charges of

[1167] *GCN*, 6 December 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1168] Putzel (*The Associated Press*), 5 June 1980, "Carter Talks to White House Conference on Families."
[1169] Brozan (*The New York Times*), 7 June 1980: 46, "2nd Day of Family Conference: Workshops and a Walkout"; Brozan (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1980: C16, "Conference on Families Produces a 57-Point Plan."
[1170] Flippen, 2011: 269.
[1171] Martin, 1996: 182.

manipulation. In Proposal 49, the sexual preference recommendation, gay rights activists set out five clauses they described as legal and human rights. The main demand was for the elimination of discrimination, and encouragement of respect, for differences based on various criteria, including, importantly, sexual preference. It also expressed support for the ERA and the right to abortion. Proposal 57 stated that community institutions should provide services which took into account individual preferences and differences in the make-up of families. Both proposals found support from workshop members and efforts were made in the "Challenges and Responsibilities" workshop to include a general non-discrimination clause. It did not pass and efforts to include "gay families" in a statement which listed types of families lost 64 to 57.[1172]

Returning to the conference on day two, gay rights advocates sought to craft a definition of family that would include homosexuals, but lost 20-18. However, an attempt by conservatives to state that only heterosexual families should be considered true families was also defeated, 22-15. The result was that the final recommendations did not contain a precise definition of the family.[1173]

However many losses gay rights advocates sustained, the conservatives came off worse, being voted down time after time when policy was debated in sub-committee. Their position against abortion received a serious setback when one subcommittee came out overwhelmingly in favour of the right to abortion for low-income women. The same subcommittee, in endorsing the ERA, referred to persons with "special preferences" and argued that there should be no discrimination against them. "Special preferences" was clearly

[1172] *The Blade*, 12 June 1980: A22, "Family Conference Results."
[1173] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 7 June 1980: A5, "Band of Conservatives Walks Out of Conference on Families."

code for homosexual households. The language in favour of the ERA and against discrimination for sexual preference was included in the 73-to-24 vote.[1174]

Although all of the gay rights advocates' successful recommendations were liable to withdrawal or failure in voting on the final day, many conservatives walked out of the conference, claiming it was rigged against them. In a dramatic scene on the platform, Virginia Republican Congressman Lawrence Pratt seized the microphone from Tucker and declared, "We have decided this delegation is stacked and we should walk out."[1175] Pratt then led a contingent of about fifty conservatives out of the room. James Bopp of Terre Haute, Ind., legal counsel for the National Right to Life Committee, declared, "It's obvious this conference was manipulated to come up with a predetermined outcome." Bopp was one of several pro-life delegates appointed by the National Advisory Committee to ensure a balanced group.[1176]

Among those who walked out was Marshner who said that she wanted to demonstrate that the conference had lost its "credibility." She said, "they are pro-ERA, pro-abortion, pro-sexual preference, pro-a guaranteed annual income, and pro-national health insurance. We have become a pitiful minority and we're walking out on principle… Our delegates told us that in some workshops ideas like freedom of sexual preference were approved. This is equivalent to an endorsement of homosexuality. We wanted to be fair but only the point of view of the conference staff could be heard."[1177] In a later press release, Marshner said that "the WHCF had totally destroyed its credibility and should be exposed as a fraud."[1178] John

[1174] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 7 June 1980: A5, "Band of Conservatives Walks Out of Conference on Families."
[1175] Rich (*The Washington Post*), 7 June 1980: A5, "Band of Conservatives Walks Out of Conference on Families."
[1176] Vandenmark (*The Associated Press*), 21 June 1980, "Abortion Fight Looms in Family Conference."
[1177] Brozan (*The New York Times*), 7 June 1980: 46, "2nd Day of Family Conference: Workshops and a Walkout"; Rich (*The Washington Post*), 7 June 1980: A5, "Band of Conservatives Walks Out of Conference on Families."
[1178] *The Blade*, 12 June 1980: A22, "Family Conference Results."

Carr described the walk-out as a publicity stunt and urged the protestors to return, without success.[1179] The walk out proved to be an act of self-destruction by the conservatives.

The final day was crucial for both sides, but particularly for gay rights advocates because the recommendation to end discrimination on the basis of sexual preference (Proposal 49), was up for the vote. Talking to the media beforehand, Tucker said he personally would not vote for it and that he had urged some delegates to follow his example.[1180] In the event, the recommendation was passed, extraordinarily, by a single vote, 292 to 291.[1181] If Marshner, Pratt, Bopp and the other about fifty conservative Christians had remained at the conference, they would have won the vote easily. Tucker said that the walk-out was directly responsible for the defeat. "Their decision to leave was directly responsible for the loss. They might otherwise have won by a comfortable margin."[1182]

However tiny the margin, for gay rights advocates, a victory was a victory. The NGTF highlighted the importance of the recommendation in itself and the fact that it was endorsed "in the face of right-wing pressure."[1183] Reporting on the conference proceedings, the gay rights newspaper, *GCN* (Gay Community News), said that openly gay and lesbian delegates were "absolutely delighted" by the passage of the recommendation. It quoted Eric Rofes, a gay activist, as saying the success was particularly impressive since only seven of the 671 delegates were openly gay or lesbian.[1184] "I think the conference has produced a series of recommendations that address the concerns that all families face and that certainly includes lesbian and gay families," said Rofes, who throughout the Conference, wore a "Gay" button.[1185] By the end of proceedings, the conference had voted on fifty-seven

[1179] Vandenmark (*The Associated Press*), 21 June 1980, "Abortion Fight Looms in Family Conference."
[1180] *The Blade*, 12 June 1980: A22, "Family Conference Results."
[1181] *GCN*, 6 December 1980. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1182] Brozan (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1980: C16, "Conference on Families Produces a 57-Point Plan."
[1183] It's Time: The Newsletter of the NGTF, 1 July 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 70. NGTF records. CU
[1184] *GCN*, 6 December 1980, Box 142, Folder 13, CU.
[1185] Williams (*The Associated Press*), 7 June 1980, "Family Conference Ends in Harmony."

recommendations, including controversial ones like the right to abortion, sexual preference and the ERA, which got through largely due to the conservatives' walk-out.[1186]

[1186] Brozan (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1980: C16, "Conference on Families Produces a 57-Point Plan."

Minneapolis (19-21 June 1980)

The Minneapolis conference was opened on June 19, 1980, by Anne Wexler, with the participation of 600 delegates.[1187] The opening and subsequent debates were generally quieter than in Baltimore, but when conservative and pro-family delegates, including Marshner, failed to get their platform included in conference recommendations, they walked out, citing the same reasons they used in Baltimore.[1188] Schlafly was not a delegate but held a press conference at which she denounced the Conference as "a media event to promote alternative life."[1189] The conservative Christians seemed more concerned about abortion than gay rights but despite strenuous efforts, their anti-abortion amendment was rejected.[1190]

In the end, the Conference endorsed almost identical recommendations to those of Baltimore, including abortion rights and the ERA. Fifty recommendations were approved out of 55 proposed, among them, by a narrow margin, a recommendation opposing the imposition of a secular, humanist philosophy in public institutions.[1191] However, the Conference proved significant as the only venue of the three to agree on a definition of the family. Two recommendations were narrowly approved to define the family as "two or more persons related by blood, heterosexual marriage, adoption or extended families." The vote was 297 to 259.[1192] The exclusion of homosexuals from the definition was a setback for the gay cause and was attributed to conservatives and right-wingers outnumbering progressives and supporters of gay rights.

[1187] White House Conference on Families, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s, Box 142, Folder 14, p. 90. NGTF records, CU; *The New York Times*, 23 June 1980: B8, "Family Conference Ends in Agreement in 10 Goals."
[1188] Fedo (*The New York Times*), 20 June 1980: 18, "Second Parley on Family Opens Quietly."
[1189] *The New York Times*, 23 June 1980: B8, "Family Conference Ends in Agreement on 10 Goals."
[1190] *The New York Times*, 22 June 1980, "Family Conference Rejects Antiabortion Amendment."
[1191] White House Conference on Families, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s, Box 142, Folder 14, p. 92. NGTF records, CU; *The New York Times*, 22 June 1980: 24, "Family Conference Rejects Antiabortion Amendment"; *The New York Times*, 23 June 1980: B8, "Family Conference Ends in Agreement on 10 Goals"; Vandenmark (*The Associated Press*), 20 June 1980, "Delegates to Conference on Families Split on Abortion."
[1192] *The New York Times*, 22 June 1980: 24, "Family Conference Rejects Antiabortion Amendment."

Los Angeles (10-12 July 1980)

Interest in the last conference at Los Angeles was heightened by the staging in Washington a few days earlier of the American Family Forum, the gathering promised by Marshner and Weyrich as a response to the conference in Baltimore. A thousand people attended and conservative pundit James Kilpatrick said it was "as one-sidedly conservative as the Baltimore affair was one-sidedly liberal." The speakers, representing the evangelical right, included Schlafly, Dobson, Beverly LeHaye and Falwell, who described the gathering as "an across-the-board rebuttal of the WHCF."[1193]

When the Los Angeles conference started on July 10, it brought together 613 delegates. [1194] Two topics dominated the opening session: a definition of the family and the role of government in personal affairs. Ann W. Peralta from Oklahoma called for endorsement of the family as "persons related by blood, marriage or adoption." But she acknowledged that "unfortunately, getting this definition adopted will be difficult because states like ours did not follow the procedure of electing all the delegates, which would have brought more traditionalists to the conference."[1195] Other topics generated heated debate, including the ERA, legalized abortion, and teen-age access to contraception.[1196]

Meanwhile, conservatives organised another extramural protest meeting, a pro-family gathering which attracted a crowd of 7,000, at Long Beach, California. Arch-conservative Tim LaHaye was the principal organiser and Schlafly was among the speakers. The meeting

[1193] Flippen, 2011: 271.
[1194] Johnson (*The New York Times*), 14 July 1980: B12, "After Heated Debates, Family Parley Ends Quietly."
[1195] Johnson (*The New York Times*), 11 July 1980: A14, "Debate shapes up as Western Conference on Families Opens."
[1196] Johnson (*The New York Times*), 14 July 1980: B12, "After Heated Debates, Family Parley Ends Quietly."

passed resolutions supporting an anti-abortion amendment and for prayer in public schools. It also called for a Senate investigation of the delegate selection to the WHCF.[1197]

Back in Los Angeles, conservative Christians once again, but not unexpectedly, staged a walk-out, protesting against what they saw as an absence of moral issues on the agenda. The walk-out was led by delegate Janie Triggs of Nevada who, like Schlafly and Bopp, charged that "the entire conference from its inception has manipulated and contributed to provide for a pre-determined outcome. To accept the pre-determined recommendations would be to drive more nails into the federally funded coffin of the American family." However, by the end of the Conference the delegates eventually endorsed these proposals by substantial margins.[1198]

Aftermath

After the conference, the White House brought out a "summary" of the major conclusions and findings, which stressed the conference's pluralist nature and the open spirit with which Carter had called the conference in the first place. However, the summary largely contained a series of what must be deliberately vague statements about exploring change and the "tensions and opportunities of time and situation."[1199] Homosexuality was not listed explicitly in the summary, but may have been intended to be considered as one of the "difficult issues" mentioned alongside abortion.[1200] The recommendations in the summary managed to call for an end to discrimination in the workplace and provide a long list of categories of people who

[1197] Johnson (*The New York Times*), 11 July 1980: A14, "Debate shapes up as Western Conference on Families Opens."; Johnson (*The New York Times*), 14 July 1980: B12, "After Heated Debates, Family Parley Ends Quietly."
[1198] Johnson (*The New York Times*), 14 July 1980: B12, "After Heated Debates, Family Parley Ends Quietly."
[1199] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, p. 11, CU.
[1200] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, p. 12, CU.

might be discriminated against without explicitly mentioning homosexuals.[1201] Buried at the end of the summary, in a section entitled "Minority Report Concerns," it stated "Three reports urged an end to discrimination against homosexuals."[1202] In October 9, 1980, less than a month before the 1980 Presidential elections, Carter received the official report on the WHCF from the National Advisory Committee (it included homosexuals among the list of possible families).[1203]

Impact and Consequences of the WHCF

Carter may have hoped that a conference on the American family would please the right-wing evangelicals who had voted for him in 1976. However, it did anything but. When the various conferences ended, he went on record as saying that he considered them "a great success," being "vigorous, well-debated, and sometimes controversial, as can be expected."[1204] He stressed that, were he to remain President following the election, he would be best placed to make changes based on the recommendations from the conferences.[1205] However, the reality was that the conferences had become more of a battleground for activists on two opposing sides than a forum for the positive and healthy exchange of views.

The impact of the WHCF on the evangelical right and the gay rights movement alike was tremendous, both being deeply affected by the results. Carter attended only the first conference, but his decisions played an extremely important role in the outcome and the aftermath. If Carter had hoped that the WHCF would help to unite Americans in working towards a set of common goals, he must have been terribly disappointed. Instead, it seems to

[1201] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14, p. 22, CU.
[1202] WHCF, A Summary, Listening to America's Families; Action for the 80s. NGTF records, Box 142, Folder 14: p. 48, CU.
[1203] Memorandum from Jim Tucker to Phil Wise, 9 October 1980. WHCF Jim Tucker. JCPL.
[1204] Office of the White House Press Secretary, Kansas, Missouri, 15 October 1979, Records of the White House Press Office (Carter Administration), 1977 – 1981, Gay Rights, Container 200. JCPL.
[1205] Office of the White House Press Secretary, Kansas, Missouri, 15 October 1979, Records of the White House Press Office (Carter Administration), 1977 – 1981, Gay Rights, Container 200. JCPL.

have served largely to highlight the vast and growing differences between two major subcultures within the United States. An article in *Newsweek* called it "the biggest political battleground between conservatives and liberals since the National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977."[1206]

On Gay Rights

As with the Women's Conference, the WHCF proved hugely important for gay rights and contributed to changing public discourse on the topic. Carter had allowed homosexual activists to participate and express their views publicly in a State-funded event of his own creation, thus bringing gay rights to the attention of every American. This alone offered the gay community increasing visibility, legitimacy and a sense of acceptance. The community was now recognised by the Government, and the President's personal involvement signalled and validated the changes that were happening for it.

Equally important was that the conferences were about families and Carter had effectively admitted that homosexual families could exist. That the National Advisory Committee of the Conferences included homosexual couples among the list of possible families was a huge victory for gay rights. At a time when the gay community was still marginalised, this was another major step towards respect, credibility, recognition and legitimacy. That Carter did not exclude homosexuals from the list of possible families, and the fact that he allowed gay rights activists to participate in the Conference played an undoubted role in the Committee coming to the conclusion that it did.

A big win for gay rights activists was approval of the recommendation that there should be an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. As in Houston, Baltimore had passed a similar recommendation despite strong opposition from

[1206] Hunter, 1991: 181.

conservatives. This was another indication that things in US politics were changing fast and that gay rights groups now had the power to influence public decisions and put pressure on the government for social reforms. More and more homosexuals became convinced that things could change and they could influence political decisions by getting organised.

Of major significance in the outcome of the conferences was Carter's refusal to surrender to demands by the evangelical right that homosexuals should be excluded from the Conferences. Had Carter given in to such pressures, none of the advances achieved for the gay community would have happened. What made Carter's decision more important, and for many thinking Americans more honourable, was that the Conferences took place during an election year, with the risks involved to his campaign. Carter accepted the political dangers and still allowed homosexuals to participate.

Finally, it must be noted that a number of gay delegates "came out" during the conference, signalling that the climate was becoming increasingly accepting of the gay community. Eddie Sandifer told the author that "certainly people would not have come out in the Conference if the environment was not welcoming. And I know that it was (welcoming) despite the attacks against us. But I think people did not care about them. For us, the important thing was that we had the acceptance of the President himself. He was the one who had allowed us to express our views and concerns at a Conference organised by him. The important thing was not to talk and convince people about our rights; the important thing was to change a president's mind about us and Carter showed with his stance in the Conference and generally that he recognised us and accepted us. Since he did that, then it was a matter of time until most of the nation did."[1207]

[1207] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview 26 February 2016.

On the Evangelical Right

As for the evangelical right, the Conference had a particular impact on its relationship with Carter. Carter had made no specific reference to homosexuals in his opening speech at Baltimore and remained circumspect on the topic of homosexuality. However, there appears to have been no doubt in the minds of the evangelical right that the WHCF had been an attempt to widen the definition of the word "family" to include homosexuals.

Evangelicals believed the President had stacked the conference with members who "… refused to privilege heterosexual families."[1208] Writing not long after the conference Falwell raged against homosexuality and the "fractured family" and stated: "with a skyrocketing divorce rate, the American family may well be on the verge of extinction in the next twenty years. Even the recent WHCF has called for an emphasis on diverse family forums (common-law, communal, homosexual and transsexual "marriages"). The Bible pattern of the family has been virtually discarded by modern American society."[1209]

Falwell's Moral Majority referred to the conference as "the Anti-Family Conference." Fob James, the Governor of Alabama, said that he would not send any delegate from his state because "it appeared that the conference was in opposition to Judeo-Christian values."[1210] Dan Richey, a state senator from Louisiana, said that, "This entire WHCF has been stacked and rigged from the very start to promote Jimmy Carter's views on gay rights, abortion, and more federal government in our lives."[1211] The Southern Baptist Convention, to which Carter belonged, denounced the conference as representing "a general undermining of the biblical concept of family."[1212]

[1208] Collins, 2012: 99.
[1209] Sutton, 2013: 124-5.
[1210] Dowland, 2009: 607.
[1211] Dugger (*The Washington Post*), 21 August 1980: A33. "Political Momentum is sought for Families Conference Goals."
[1212] Phillips, 2006: 185.

Schlafly denounced the very idea of the WHCF as "stupid" and said that "it was travesty to call it a family conference when those in attendance were in favour of calling homosexuals a family." For Schlafly and her followers, families were "defined by heterosexual marriage, blood relationships, and the legality of adoption" and all of their members should perform clear roles that were largely dictated by gender.[1213] Beverly LeHaye claimed that Carter had "falsely used his born-again image to hoodwink people into thinking he is one of us."[1214]

In response to what they saw as the excessively liberal agenda at the WHCF, the religious right wing hastily organised their own American Family Forum, which was held between June 30 and July 2, 1980. It featured mostly religious right-wing stalwarts such as Schlafly, Dobson, Falwell, Marshner, and Weyrich. The topics under discussion were focused on Christianity and the family, and included panels that dealt with what delegates saw as the attack on them from homosexuals and liberals such as one entitled "The Problem of Homosexuality versus the Family." Weyrich described as "garbage" the idea that a "couple of fornicators" or "couple of lesbians" could bring up a child and describe themselves as a family.[1215] Finally, in 1980, the Southern Baptist Convention "passed resolutions denouncing pornography, homosexuality, human evolution and the WHCF …" With these resolutions, the Southern Baptist Convention was now at odds with almost all of Carter's views on important social issues.[1216]

The WHCF was an ambitious initiative by Carter, who believed that it would help the American family while hoping it would improve his standing among right wing evangelicals. In the event, it was an enormous own goal with regards to his relationship with evangelicals.

[1213] Taranto, 2010: 182.
[1214] Clendinen, D., and Nagourney, 1999: 423.
[1215] Ribuffo, 2006: 329.
[1216] Williams, 2010: 158.

CONCLUSION

The WHCF and the NWC had been posited as an opportunity for Americans to come together and find shared interests and goals. Instead, they served primarily as a display case for the two camps forming in America which appeared doomed to remain in diametric opposition. The conferences impacted significantly on the issue of gay rights, but also on the evangelical right. In many ways, the effects of the debates are still being felt today.

For gay and lesbian activists, both events played an important role in advancing their cause, especially with regard to public discourse. For the first time, gay activists were given a public platform from which they could discourse on who they were, what were their needs and what they hoped to achieve. Importantly, this took place at State-funded events with the active approval of the President. The Conferences gave gay activists unprecedented visibility and legitimacy on a national scale to make known their presence and problems to a largely unaware American public. The fact that homosexuals were included in the list of families in an event organized by the President was an immense boost for gay activists' morale.

The conferences also brought home to the NGTF and other gay rights activists that if they organised seriously, their voices could be heard and could bring influence where it was needed, thus strengthening the movement. Both the families and women's conferences voted against discrimination over sexual preference, which gay rights activists saw as further proof that they could influence social policy by getting organised. They realised that such organisation called not only for the formation of alliances among gay groups, but for the building of coalitions with non-gay but like-minded lobbyists. For instance, some feminists had different aims, but the same opponents: the conservative Christians.

None of the above would have happened if Carter had not appointed progressive people to key positions or if he had given in to pressure from the evangelical right to exclude homosexuals from the two events. Of particular importance to the lesbian community was

Carter's decision to replace the conservative members of the Women's Committee appointed by President Ford with people recommended by Costanza. This decision played a massively important role not only in the organization but in the outcome of the Women's Conference. Carter's refusal to ban gays from the WHCF was also of major importance; it played a hugely important role in the Conference's recommendations and the walk-outs from each Conference by evangelicals.

Although the evangelical right lost a number of key battles to gay activists, the two events had a marked effect on the movement. Mobilising its supporters to an extent never seen before, the evangelical right became active rather than passively defensive in its campaign to protect traditional society against what it saw as societal corruption and especially the decadence of the new "American family." One result was the creation of several evangelical, right-wing interest groups that played an important role in the 1980 elections and are still active and powerful today. The right wing evangelicals, too, came to understand the value of coalition politics, binding themselves into groups and alliances to combat the increasing strength and influence of the gay rights movement.

Both events had a profound effect on Carter. They certainly strengthened his position with gays, but dealt a serious blow to his relations with the evangelical right, a relationship that never recovered. From a public relations perspective, the WHCF in particular proved to be a massive debacle, especially coming so close to the 1980 elections. For the gay community, however, it contributed uniquely to changing public discourse on gay rights in the United States. As Tony Campolo told the author, "The chaotic WHCF was what brought the homosexual issue to the fore in American political discussion."[1217]

[1217] Dr. Tony Campolo in a personal interview, 30 April 2014.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EVANGELICAL RIGHT AND GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS VS. CARTER DURING HIS PRESIDENCY: PRESSURE AND DISSATISFACTION

INTRODUCTION

We have already examined the principal issues of concern to gay rights activists and how Carter responded to them, as well as the evangelical right's reaction to Carter's decisions and policies in this area. In this chapter, we will explore the additional pressures which Carter faced from both sides in their attempts to influence his policies. We will also consider some of Carter's decisions which led to dissatisfaction in both of these movements, and most importantly, we will examine how Christian conservatives moved to organise their ranks in response to what they saw as Carter's liberal policies.

Having courted both evangelical Christians and gay rights activists prior to the election, Carter found himself in a delicate situation when he moved into the White House. Somehow, he would have to continue to show those on the evangelical right that his faith was not just for the election campaign, and that he was an upright and moral person, while also honouring commitments he had made to act against discrimination and in favour of human rights for everyone. At the same time, he needed to observe the division of church and state that he had referenced as being so important to him.

Both liberals and activists among the right wing evangelicals, and other right wing groups, had long to-do lists for the new President, who had relied on each end of the spectrum for support. He was lobbied to meet their requests to initiate specific policies, to make high-level appointments from their ranks and to meet their officials and discuss their agendas. Among the liberals was the increasingly organised and politically astute gay rights movement, which had been promised significant reform in the event of Carter's being

elected. Gay activists hoped that Carter would engage with substantial legislative reform that would strengthen their position and remove discrimination against them across a range of areas. On the other hand, members of the evangelical right hoped that the new President, a born-again Christian, would return faith to the heart of American democracy, including taking a hard line against what they saw as perversion in the form of any homosexual activity or activism.

Carter never wavered from his belief that a clear separation between church and state, as discussed earlier, was hugely important. In fact, he found justification for this view in his Baptist faith; the Baptist church had long held this tenet. Throughout his presidency, Carter had managed to juggle his public faith with his view that the government had no role in legislating over moral issues and that a separation between church and state was essential. Carter was entirely honest when he said that he considered homosexuality to be a sin, but he was equally honest in believing that homosexuals should not be harassed and should have the same rights as everyone else. Marilyn Haft remembered in a personal interview that, "His point of view… when he was President was that what he believed as a religious person [who had personal and religious issues with homosexuality] should not and would not influence what was his duty to do, which was to protect people under the US Constitution with equal rights…"[1218] The task of juggling these views was going to prove increasingly difficult as his presidency progressed and he continued to be petitioned by two social forces that agreed on practically nothing.

PRESSURE AND DISSATISFACTION FROM THE EVANGELICAL RIGHT

The Carter team made use of the interregnum between the election and the inauguration to discuss how best to relate with the various special interest groups which had supported the

[1218] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.

president-to-be. Central to these discussions was Phil Strickland, Carter's religious expert during the campaign. Strickland suggested that there should be a permanent White House liaison to the believing community, someone "religious enough to understand religious mind-sets and political enough to understand issues."[1219] Fearing that religious leaders and groups had been "shut out" of the White House and believing that there was an urgent need to address the situation, he offered to take on the coordinating role himself.[1220]

Accordingly, on December 3, 1976, Strickland sent Carter a memorandum suggesting concrete measures to strengthen relations with the religious community he considered vital to Carter's success. These included immediate meetings with key religious leaders, formation of a standing advisory group on religious issues and the initiation of contacts with special interest groups, including civil rights campaigners and feminists.[1221] In a subsequent memorandum, Strickland also included a list of such groups, noting that they would want to interact with Carter and that his success could depend on his relationship with them.[1222] Two weeks later, Carter thanked Strickland for his "helpful" memos, but gave no indication that he intended to act on his suggestions.[1223] Carter began his term as President with the religious liaison idea still under discussion by White House aides and in February 1977, Strickland once again stressed the importance of such a role and again offered to fill it.[1224]

With the link-person issue still undecided, Carter received a request from an old acquaintance offering to work in the White House in the role Strickland had suggested for himself. This was the Rev. Robert (Bob) Maddox, a native of Georgia, and a minister of the evangelical Southern Baptist Church. Like Strickland, Maddox felt that Carter needed to

[1219] Memorandum of Phil Strickland to Jimmy Carter, 3 December 1976. Landon Butler files, Box 91. JCPL.
[1220] Letter from Phil Strickland to Landon Butler, 16 February 1977. Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[1221] Letter from Phil Strickland to Jimmy Carter, 12 March 1976, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[1222] Letter from Phil Strickland to Landon Butler, 16 February 1977, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[1223] Letter from Phil Strickland to Jimmy Carter, 12 March 1976, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[1224] Letter from Phil Strickland to Landon Butler, 16 February 1977, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.

maintain a close relationship with the religious community for the success of his policies and for his chances of re-election in four years' time.[1225]

Religious pressures on the Carter team had become evident even earlier, in this case concerning the Cabinet. In the period between Carter's victory and his move into the White House, the Rev. Pat Robertson and other prominent evangelicals drew up a list of twenty Christians as possible members of the President's Cabinet; they then chartered a plane and delivered the list to Carter's home in Plains, Georgia.[1226] They felt fully entitled to make such a request since Carter had promised them top posts in his administration when he was interviewed on Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network during the 1976 campaign.[1227] Robertson gave his support to Carter on the basis of his promises during the interview.[1228]

The speed and the organised nature of the religious requests so soon after Carter's election pointed up the high expectations they had of him. However, Carter ignored their requests and recommendations, thus ensuring he got off to a bad start in this crucially important relationship. Indeed, it was a misstep from which he would never recover. When Carter announced his Cabinet, it contained none of Robertson's suggested appointees, but included people the evangelicals considered to be godless and, as one said, unable to "speak the language of the Bible."[1229] Many right wing Christians concluded that Carter had used them to get himself elected, then ignored their wishes. As for his failure to appoint any of the twenty evangelicals on the list, this was something which Robertson would never forgive.[1230]

When it came to the widely canvassed proposal for a religious liaison person first suggested by Strickland, Carter chose instead to create a new White House department, the

[1225] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1226] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 8 December 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1227] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 8 December 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1228] Pat Robertson's letter to Robert Maddox, 5 September 1980, Folder: Correspondence File 10/20/80-10/31/80, Box 102, Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox. JCPL.
[1229] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 8 December 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1230] Pat Robertson's letter to Robert Maddox, 5 September 1980, Folder: Correspondence File 10/20/80-10/31/80, Box 102, Office of Public Liaison Robert Maddox. JCPL.

Office of Public Liaison, which would oversee both religious and non-religious matters. As Director of the new office, he appointed Costanza,[1231] who was already *persona non grata* with the evangelicals because of her stance on gay rights, the ERA and abortion. That she would now be in charge of religious affairs further angered the evangelicals.

Despite Carter's coolness in the matter of his memo, Strickland continued to supply information and suggestions on religious issues to the new President, as did Bob Maddox. However, Carter appeared unable to respond to what was his most natural constituency, the evangelical Christians, causing a growing alienation.[1232] Because evangelicals had enjoyed easy access to Presidents Johnson and Nixon, they assumed the door to Carter would be opened even wider. That is clear from a letter to Carter from Jack Harwell, editor of the *Christian Index.* Apparently assuming that Carter would invite leaders of the Southern Baptist Church to meet with him in the White House, Harwell expressed fears that Carter might be accused of "establishing some kind of Baptist Vatican on the Potomac." [1233] Carter replied that any such meeting might be better held elsewhere than at the White House, but assured him that the Baptists had no need to be concerned about his actions.[1234]

In the event, Carter did meet with leading Southern Baptists several times during his Presidency, including in the White House, but only with the moderates and on a personal rather than an official basis. Peter Bourne said in a personal interview that "Carter was very conscious of the separation of church and state in the US constitution and history. He did feel a close affinity with the progressive branch (the least fundamentalist) of the Southern Baptists and held several meetings at the White House with their representatives. However he was

[1231] Organizational changes in the Office of Public Liaison Memorandum from 31 March 1977, Public Liaison and Reorganization folder, Box 14, Midge Costanza files, JCPL; Letter from Phil Strickland to Landon Butler, 16 February 1977, Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[1232] Letter from Phil Strickland to Laurie Lucey, n.d., Landon Butler files, Box: 91. JCPL.
[1233] Letter from Jack Harwell to Jack Carter, 23 June 1977. Box: Religious Matters 1, File: RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1234] Letter from Jimmy Carter to Jack Harwell, 11 August 1977, Box: Religious Matters 1, File: RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.

careful to do so on a personal basis without involving any of his White House staff in the meetings. He did tell these groups that he felt he had a unique opportunity as president to spread the word of God with other world leaders and other groups he met with around the world. In this sense he was very much an evangelical."[1235]

However, the separation of church and state, so dear to Carter, was anathema to the evangelical right and Falwell once said, "The idea of separation of church and state was invented by the Devil to keep Christians from running their own country."[1236] Nevertheless, Carter continued to insist, throughout his Presidency, that the separation of church and state was important, and that one could believe this and still be a sincere and committed Christian. He said: "I believe as a Baptist that there should be a proper separation of the Church and State. This nation requires by law that the Church and State be separated, with the church not dominating the government, nor the government dominating the Church. At the same time, I do not believe that a human being can separate in one's heart and mind the responsibilities in government and responsibilities to God. I have never let my beliefs interfere in my administration of the duties of President, yet I have never found any incompatibility in being President and a god-fearing person. I pray more than I did when I was not President and continue my commitment to Jesus Christ as before."[1237]

From the moment he assumed office in 1977, Carter refused requests to meet religious groups or attend their events and outraged evangelicals charged that gay rights activists seemed able to secure access to the President while they could not. Every year for three years Carter was invited to speak at the National Religious Broadcasters' annual meeting in Washington, but declined each time. He only accepted the fourth invitation, in 1980, in the

[1235] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.
[1236] Newman, 2009: 696.
[1237] Press Release of the White House secretary, 15 October 1979, Records of the White House Press Office (Carter Administration), 1977 – 1981, Religion, Container 31. JCPL.

run-up to the Presidential elections, and this was after Maddox convinced him that the previous three rejections were "serious tactical mistakes."[1238]

The above was not the only request Carter turned down. Back in 1977, Carter was invited to speak at the Southern Baptist Convention[1239] and at the National Prayer Breakfast;[1240] Campus Crusade, a ministry for college evangelism, asked him to appear in a film about prayer; [1241] Rita Warner, president of the Christian Civil Liberties Union, asked Carter to meet her about a White House rally planned for July 29, 1977 about "God and country";[1242] in May 1978, Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network invited Carter to make an appearance in a TV programme, "It's Time to Pray, America."[1243] Carter declined all these requests.

Fundamentalist Christians expressed their frustrations at failing to meet with Carter in October 1977 when they demonstrated outside the White House against child abuse, sex textbooks in schools and pornography. They "demanded" to see Carter on grounds that they were "the President's people." They said they had been trying to meet with Midge Costanza for six months and felt she was giving them "the run-around." The demonstrators told two of Carter's aides, Jan Peterson and Ed Smith, "The gays can get into the White House, but we can't. What kind of administration is this?"[1244]

[1238] Memorandum from Bob Maddox to Carol Emig, 18 January 1980, National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast folder, Box: 107, Office of Public Liaison, Bob Maddox, Religious Liaison, Memos through Prayer, Voluntary. JCPL; Letter from Robert Maddox to Guests at White House Breakfast, 21 January 1980, National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast folder, Box: 107, Office of Public Liaison, Bob Maddox. JCPL.
[1239] Flippen, 2011: 116-8.
[1240] Letter from Fran Voorde to John G. Kester, 27 January 1978. Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 through Executive, Folder RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1241] Letter from Patricia Y. Bario to James LaMarr, 7 April 1977, Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 through Executive, RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1242] Letter from Rita Warren to President Jimmy Carter; 12 July 1977, Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 through Executive, Folder RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1243] Letter from Jody Powell to Harald Bredesen, 23 May 1978, Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 through Executive, Folder RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1244] Memorandum from Ed Smith to Midge Costanza, 19 October 1977. Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings, 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771*)*, 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

For some Christians, Carter came to be seen not just as indifferent to their cause but as its enemy. With gay leaders increasingly visible and discussions on homosexuality gone mainstream, their bitterness led some zealots to denounce Carter as "the anti-Christ."[1245] Mel White, a long-standing member of the evangelical Protestant movement and the biographer of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Billy Graham and James Dobson, gave a personal interview to the author about those days. He said, "Generally, all these fundamentalist Christian leaders saw Carter as a traitor to the Christian cause for his progressive stance on so many issues, including homosexuality."[1246] At this time, the US media were dominated by the hostage crisis in Tehran. Some Christian conservatives claimed that the taking of American hostages in Iran was the result of moral degradation back home, part of which was the concern over issues such as gay rights.[1247]

In addition, many Christians, especially those on the evangelical right, already felt that Carter had betrayed them: "… he served alcohol in the White House; he supported the ERA; whilst personally opposed to abortion, he had not taken a sufficiently activist position against it; he did not speak out for prayer in the schools; he allowed homosexuals to work in the White House; and he had not, as they claimed he had promised, hired evangelicals for his staff. 'He surrounded himself with Godless people," they claimed.[1248]

The disappointment of the right wing Christians who had voted for Carter in such numbers are exemplified by his desertion by one-time evangelical supporters such as Pat Robertson[1249] and in a *Playboy* interview with Anita Bryant:

"Playboy: […] Do you have any heroes?

[1245] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1246] Mel White in a personal interview, 7 March 2014.
[1247] Fletcher Brothers' letter to Jimmy Carter, 7 August 1980, Folder "Gay Issues," Box 105, Robert Maddox Series, Records of Anne Wexler. JCPL.
[1248] Bourne, 1997: 467.
[1249] 1997: 34.

Bryant: I don't have many. I don't know if I have *any*. I think the reason I'm so disillusioned is because I really looked at Jimmy Carter as a hero, as one who had caught the eye and heartbeat of the grass roots of America. I really had great expectations of him, and I found that in life, when you put different individuals on a pedestal, God very carefully takes them off the pedestal and shows us that we're to put *no one* there.

"Playboy: Why did you sour on Carter?

Bryant: Well, how can a born-again Christian who's truly born-again not take a stand against the sin of homosexuality? He himself stated in the *Playboy* Interview [prior to the election in 1976, discussed above], which my husband brought me to read, that he was against homosexuality, and yet he allows Midge Costanza to go down to Dade County and campaign for homosexuality. She was paid by our opposition to come down. I won't say any further what I know about her, because that's not important [presumably here Bryant is referring to the rumours of Costanza's homosexuality, which were in fact true], but the thing is that she has an open door to the President of the United States, who claims to be a born-again Christian, when homosexuality is at the very core of what God is against.

Playboy: You mean the *Playboy* Interview helped convince you to go for Carter?

Bryant: I felt overall that it was not bad, except for some of the choice words he used, and I even understood why he felt compelled to use them.

Playboy: And now you feel betrayed by him?

Bryant: Well, we're pretty much in touch with the heartbeat of the grassroots people and most of those people are totally dismayed and disillusioned by Carter… I wanted to support Carter because I wanted to believe that he was really a Christian, but his sister Gloria Spann said in an interview that she doesn't even believe in hell... That's hard to believe. I think I represent a lot of Christians. I would probably say the majority of Christians, and they're looking at Carter right now and most of them are saying that he's a one-term President. I

believe that when a man is President, we have an obligation as Christians to pray for him, so I'm caught between a rock and a hard place, because I want to defend him, but yet I can't discuss the straddling on the fence he's done so far on all the important issues like ERA, homosexuality, the Panama Canal, etc."[1250]

According to Peter Bourne, another important reason for evangelicals' unhappiness with Carter was race. He told the author that the opposition to Carter "that built up prior to the 1980 election was due to many things. Race may have been the most significant part. In 1976, white southerners (including fundamentalists) were willing to overlook his pro-integration statement as necessary rhetoric to appeal to the black vote and whites elsewhere in the country. They assumed that once elected he would return to traditional 'southern' values. When, as President, he began appointing African-Americans in large numbers to high level positions in government and clearly demonstrated his commitment to racial equality, they felt he had betrayed them. Having elected him in 1976 as the first southern president since Lyndon B. Johnson, this regional chauvinism did not apply to anywhere the same degree the second time around. In 1976 the alternative to Carter was Gerald Ford who held no particular appeal in the South."[1251]

The growing rift between Carter and the evangelicals sent danger signals to Maddox, and in September 1978, he suggested that Carter should appoint him to act as the White House's official liaison with the Christians. [1252] Carter declined the suggestion,[1253] but when Maddox continued to contribute memos and letters, he was eventually appointed to the President's speech-writing team.[1254]

[1250] *Playboy*, May 1978: 250. "Anita Bryant, a Candid Conversation about Jews, Gays, Sex, Politics and Orange Juice with the Crusading Singer Who Would Show Homosexuals the Way to Salvation."
[1251] Peter Bourne in a personal interview, 13 March 2014.
[1252] Letter, Robert Maddox to Jimmy Carter, 1 September 1978. Box: Religious Matters 1, File: 1/20/77-12/31/78. JCPL.
[1253] Letter from President Carter to Reverend Bob Maddox, 3 October 1978. Religious Matters File, 10/1/78-5/31/79. JCPL.
[1254] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.

Evangelicals get Organised

Anger, frustration and a bitter sense of betrayal felt by evangelicals towards Carter resulted in the widespread political mobilisation of conservative Christians between 1977 and 1980. In the evangelical Christians' eyes, morally degenerative issues such as abortion, the ERA and gay rights had been allowed to flourish under Carter's leadership. Colonel Donner, chief strategist of the Christian Voice, said, "It was a tremendous let-down, if not a betrayal, to have Carter stumping for the ERA, for not stopping federally paid abortions, for advocating homosexual rights."[1255] Between 1977 and 1980, no fewer than eight major new Christian groups were formed. They were:

- Christian Voice, formed in 1978 by Reverends Dr. Robert Grant and Richard Zone by merging a number of other right wing Christian groups.
- Concerned Women for America (1979).
- Evangelicals for Social Action (1978).
- Focus on the Family, founded in 1977 by psychologist James Dobson.
- The Moral Majority, formed in 1979 by Jerry Falwell.
- The National Christian Action Coalition, established in 1978 by Robert Billings, who left a year later to become the first executive director of the Moral Majority.
- The Religious Roundtable, also founded in 1979, by Ed McAteer, and featuring Southern Baptist televangelist James Robinson and a number of conservative Jews and Catholics.
- Save Our Children (1977).[1256]

The aim of these new groups was to gather the support of all of the nation's right-wing Christians, estimated at seventy-five million and ranging from Mormons and Southern

[1255] Meyer et all (*Newsweek*), 15 September 1980: 28, "A Tide of Born-Again Politics."
[1256] Collins, 2012: 94; Djupe and Olson, 2003: 99, 383-4.; Flippen, 2011: 23; Gilgoff, 2007: 23; Schultz et al, 1999: 79, 164-5, 211; Utter and Storey, 2006: 173, 178.

Baptists to traditionalist Roman Catholics. Using mass mailing methods and television advertising, they began raising funds to support their lobbying efforts. These included such goals as tax breaks for church schools and campaigns against abortions and gay rights.[1257]

The new organizations turned out to be very able campaigners, but they did not appear to feel the need to adopt new ways of communicating and protesting. Rather, they relied on well-established networks of conservative Christian churches and used old-style forms of communication such as newsletters to rally support for their cause.[1258] As for results, Rev. Zone claimed that within months of Christian Voice's formation, it had recruited more than 100,000 members and had amassed nearly $1 million to propagate its aims. New members, he said, included nearly 1.500 clergy, of whom some 300 were Catholic priests.[1259]

Falwell's fight message was that most Americans did not welcome the social changes they believed the left wing was imposing on them, that these changes were contrary to both God's law and common sense, that they should be opposed, and that those who opposed them represented a potent element of the electorate that had the right to make demands and to be heard. "We believe that in the 1980s we can have an impact on re-creating a moral climate in this country that has disappeared. We want to reverse legislation that affects moral issues," said Falwell.[1260] Although Falwell tried to present the Moral Majority as ecumenical, it was largely composed of members of the evangelical right with shared views on a range of concerns, including anxiety about increasingly liberal views of homosexuality.[1261] Summing up the strength of the evangelical movement in 1979, *Christianity Today* calculated that it owned more than 1,300 broadcast networks, which reached 130 million viewers and listeners

[1257] Kotkin (*The Washington Post*), 25 August 1979: 10, "Ready on the Right: Christian Soldiers are on the March."
[1258] Bernstein, 1997: 535.
[1259] Kotkin (*The Washington Post*), 25 August 1979: 10, "Ready on the Right: Christian Soldiers are on the March."
[1260] Blackman (*The Associated Press*), 27 September 1980, "Fundamentalists Move Into Political Arena, Target Liberals."
[1261] Hudson, 2008: 20.

and brought in profits of several billions of dollars.[1262] The political mobilisation of conservative Protestants, begun in 1977, started a wave of change which continues to this day.

The Pressure from Right Wing Evangelicals Grows

Keenly aware of the significant power of the evangelical right as a voting bloc, Falwell was working hard to assert the Moral Majority as a potent political force and focused a great deal of attention on ensuring that its supporters were registered to vote, and it made full use of its network. In his own church in Lynchburg, Falwell used an exercise every Sunday in which he asked the entire congregation to stand up, and then asked those who had been registered to sit down again. Then, "he lectured those who remained standing on their duty to get on the election rolls and warned that he would repeat the same procedure every Sunday until Election Day."[1263]

Similar procedures were carried out in fundamentalist churches all over the country and as the 1980 Presidential election approached, Falwell claimed to have registered four million new voters.[1264] He gave specific instructions to pastors about how to recruit voters from their congregations and how they should persuade them to write to their representatives. On January 16, 1980, Falwell addressed a gathering of pastors in Orlando, Florida as follows: "What can you do from the pulpit? You can register people to vote. You can explain the issues to them. And you can endorse candidates, right there in church on Sunday morning… Here's what you do. You tell everybody in your congregation to bring two stamped envelopes to church on Sunday. And don't assume they know who their state representative is.... Make

[1262] *Christianity Today*, 21 December 1979, "The Christianity Today Gallup Poll: an Overview."
[1263] Guth, 1983: 33.
[1264] Frankel and Barker (*The Washington Post*), 6 November 1980: C1, "Virginia Republicans Now More Eager For '81 Election; Landslide Improves Virginia Republicans' Prospects for Next Year."

them write those letters in church. It's all perfectly legal as long as you don't use the building for special meetings. Do it right during the service."[1265]

Under Falwell's influence, a loose coalition of Christian leaders which came to be known as the New Right began to achieve impressive results, especially in targeting politicians it considered unacceptably liberal. Falwell described his own church as a "sleeping giant," which he said was now "standing again across the nation."[1266] The New Right's first success was to help block passage of the ERA in fifteen states, while the Moral Majority alone spent more than $3 million in two years opposing selected Senate candidates. Falwell warned office-holders with liberal records that they "would do well to examine their records and get in step with conservative values or be prepared to be unemployed." He added, "The whole world knows there are several senators who have consistently stood on the wrong side of all the moral issues and ignored any attempt by others to redirect them."[1267]

Evangelicals then started crossing names from their hit list. In 1978, they helped to unseat two liberal senators, Dick Clark of Iowa and Thomas McIntyre of New Hampshire, and they were credited with helping to elect at least one governor, Fob James of Alabama. They failed to keep George H.W. Bush off the Republican ticket but its preferred candidates won against the odds in primaries for the Senate and the House in Alabama, Alaska and Iowa.[1268]

The Moral Majority won a major victory in June 1979 when it seized control of Alaska's Republican Party ensuring that their preferred Presidential candidate, Ronald Reagan, secured all of Alaska's delegates to the party's national convention in June. The anti-

[1265] Vecsey (*The New York Times*), 21 January 1980: A21, "Militant Television Preachers Try to Weld Fundamentalist Christians' Political Power."
[1266] Sullivan (*The New York Times*), 11 November 1980: 2, Falwell Warns Jersey Liberals at Capitol Rally."
[1267] Blackman (*The Associated Press*), 27 September 1980, "Fundamentalists Move Into Political Arena, Target Liberals."; Sullivan (*The New York Times*), 11 November 1980: 2, Falwell Warns Jersey Liberals at Capitol Rally."
[1268] Anderson (*The Washington Post*), 22 April 1979, "The Right Wing's Hit List."; Meyer et all (*Newsweek*), 15 September 1980: 28, "A Tide of Born-Again Politics."

liberal rhetoric was unmistakeable. Dr. Jerry Prevo, pastor of the Anchorage Baptist Temple and leader of the Moral Majority in Alaska, declared that "Our country is rapidly turning into a 20th century Sodom and Gomorrah because we have permitted a few amoral humanists to take over the most influential positions in our nation." A brochure prepared for the convention by Prevo read, "Advocates of abortion on demand, recognition of homosexuals as a *bona fide* minority, pornography, prostitution, gambling, free use of drugs and much, much more are destroying this country."[1269] When South Dakota's Democratic Sen. George McGovern failed in his bid for a fourth term in 1980, he blamed the evangelicals and called for a new organization to battle what he characterised as "the new extremism" represented by such groups as the Moral Majority and Christian Voice.[1270]

Belatedly realising that forces which formerly were his allies were now threatening his hold on office, Carter accepted Maddox's long-standing offer and made him the responsible official for religious affairs in the Office of Public Liaison.[1271] Reportedly, the appointment took place partly through the intervention of Rosalynn Carter, who could see how strongly the tide had turned against her husband.[1272]

In a personal interview, Professor Randall Balmer recalled how Carter realised he was in trouble with the evangelicals: "I think it's fair to say that he was blindsided by the Religious Right. When I asked him how he first became aware of politically conservative evangelicals mobilizing against him, he told me that his sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, initially alerted him to the fact that Falwell had said all sorts of "nasty things" about him at a rally in Juneau, Alaska. Carter also told me that when he learned that conservatives had taken over his own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, in June 1979 he knew he was in

[1269] Turner (*The New York Times*), 9 June 1979, "Group of Evangelical Protestants Takes Over the GOP in Alaska."
[1270] Anderson (*United Press International*), 5 November 1980, "Moral Majority: Out of the pews and to the polling places."
[1271] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1272] Bourne, 1997: 467.

trouble. By then, arguably, it was already too late to reverse the damage, although he brought in Robert Maddox, a Southern Baptist minister, to try to stanch the bleeding."[1273]

It did not take long for Maddox to realise that Carter was in serious trouble with the evangelicals since even his own Southern Baptist church complained that they were blocked and that "they had no access to the White House … they couldn't find anybody to work with in the Carter administration."[1274] Maddox anticipated the challenge Carter would face in the upcoming presidential election from them, noting that, "[Carter's] 'born-again' faith raises their expectations and makes him more vulnerable to their charges of inconsistency if he does not lift up selected issues."[1275]

In a memo dated July 27, 1979, Maddox urged Carter to establish constructive contacts with fundamentalist groups, noting that while their politics "tended to be very conservative, even rightist," they represented "a 40 million constituency." He said he was willing to travel throughout America, talk to believers, take part in their meetings and make personal contact with the leaders of conservative Christian groups with the aim of bringing Carter closer to the religious sector, in particular the right-wing evangelicals.[1276] As far as I can establish, there was no response.

In August 1979, Maddox told Carter that the religious conservatives were focussing strongly on family matters such as abortion, the ERA, and gay rights, and that two major groups were growing in strength, namely the Moral Majority and Christian Voice. He recommended strongly that Carter should meet with leaders like Falwell, Robertson, Dr. Adrian Rogers and Bob Jones III."[1277] Again Carter did nothing, as far as I can establish.

[1273] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.
[1274] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1275] Memorandum of Robert Maddox to Jody Powell, n.d., "Correspondence n.d." folder, Box 98, Records of Anne Wexler—Robert Maddox Series. JCPL.
[1276] Memorandum of Robert Maddox to Jerry Rafshoon and Greg Schneiders, 27 July 1979. Religious Liaison folder. Records of Anne Wexler—Robert Maddox Series, Correspondence File 8/1-8/14/79, Box 98. JCPL.
[1277] Memo ("Meeting with Ad Hoc Group of Conservative Religious Leaders") from R. Maddox to P. Wise and A. Wexler, 28 August 1979, White House Central File, Subject File: Religious Matters 1, Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81. JCPL.

In September, 1979, the Moral Majority requested a meeting with Carter, a proposal which Maddox and Wexler urged Carter to accept, arguing that it gave him the chance to build bridges with the evangelicals. It never happened.[1278] Then in a memo to Carter dated October 5, 1979, Maddox stressed that disenchanted conservative believers were "moving into the political arena" and were shaping up to be "a significant factor in the 1980 election."[1279] Maddox and Wexler continued to pursue Carter and in another October 1979 memo, warned that he was running out of time to mend relations with the evangelicals. They informed him that some religious leaders had begun talking to other presidential candidates, one of whom was Reagan.[1280]

In November 1979, Maddox again asked Carter to speak at the January 1980 convention of National Religious Broadcasters, something he had turned down in the previous three years.[1281] This time, Carter agreed, though his address may not have gone a long way to building bridges since part of it was devoted to the need for humility by preachers and televangelists.[1282]

[1278] Memorandum from Bob Maddox to Phil Wise and Anne Wexler, 28 August 1979, Folder RM l/20/77-l/20-81, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20-81 through Executive, RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL; Memorandum from Anne Wexler to Phil Wise, 10 September 1979, Folder RM l/20/77-l/20-81, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20-81 through Executive, RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1279] Memo of R. Maddox to Carter, 5 October 1979, WHCF, Subject File IV (Invitations), "IV/1980/FG 114, 1/20/77-1/20/81, General," Box IV-7. JCPL.
[1280] Memorandum from Bob Maddox and Anne Wexler to Phil Wise, 22 October 1979, Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 folder, Box RM- 1 "Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 through Executive, RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1281] Memorandum from Bob Maddox to Fran Voorde, 16 November 1979. Folder RM 1/20/77-1/20/81, Box RM-1 "Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 through Executive, RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77. JCPL.
[1282] Memorandum of Robert Maddox to Anne Wexler, "Weekly Report," 25 January 1980. Folder: "Correspondence File 1/80", Box 99, Records of Anne Wexler—Robert Maddox Series. JCPL.

Evangelicals in the White House

Aware that speaking at a convention carried considerably less weight than a face-to-face meeting, Maddox and Wexler renewed their campaign to get evangelicals into the White House. Finally Carter, after listening to arguments that right wing votes were steadily flowing away from him, agreed to a meeting.[1283] In January 1980, Maddox arranged what he hoped would be a "cordial" White House breakfast for leading evangelicals[1284] such as Jimmy Allen, Jim Bakker, Robert Dugan, Jerry Falwell, Brandt Gustavson, Rex Humbard, Howard Jones, James Kennedy, Tim LaHaye, Oral Roberts, Demos Shakarian, Dr. Morris Sheats, Ronald Sider, and Charles Stanley.[1285] One invitee who did not attend was Pat Robertson.[1286] He had not forgotten that Carter failed to appoint even one of the evangelical Christian nominees from his proposed list of White House appointees.[1287]

After three years of trying, the evangelicals got to talk to the President over breakfast in the White House on January 22, 1980. Carter had been banking on his religious faith standing him in good stead, but Maddox recognised that in some respects it was a liability, raising evangelicals' expectations and the possibility that they would see Carter as "inconsistent" when he did not do what they wanted or expected.[1288] Maddox asked the participants to express their major concerns. While there were some questions about matters not specifically of interest to evangelicals, most of the questions posed by the various pastors

[1283] Memorandum of Robert Maddox to Phil Wise and Anne Wexler, "Meeting with Ad Hoc Group of Conservative Religious Leaders," 28 August 1979. Religious Matters, Box 1, Folder 1. JCPL.
[1284] Memorandum of R. Maddox to Carol Emig, 18 January 1980, National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast folder, Box: 107, Office of Public Liaison, Bob Maddox, Religious Liaison, Memos through Prayer, Voluntary. JCPL; Letter from Robert Maddox to Guests at White House Breakfast, 21 January 1980, National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast folder, Box: 107, Office of Public Liaison, Bob Maddox, Religious Liaison, Memos through Prayer, Voluntary. JCPL.
[1285] "Guests at the Evangelical Leaders Breakfast," 22 January 1980, "National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast" folder, Box 107, Records of Anne Wexler—Robert Maddox Series. JCPL.
[1286] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1287] Letter from Pat Robertson to R. Maddox, 9 May 1980, Correspondence File 10/20/80-10/31/80 folder, Box 102, Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox. JCPL.
[1288] Memorandum of R. Maddox to Jody Powell, "Religious Aspects of the Campaign," n.d., "Correspondence n.d." folder, Box 98, Records of Anne Wexler—Robert Maddox Series. JCPL.

were about matters of faith and morality, like abortion, homosexuals, the ERA, prayer in public schools, defence, no evangelicals in government and "that kind of stuff." Carter responded in a very cordial fashion, indicating there were no bad feelings.[1289]

Dr. Morris Sheats, pastor of a church of 6,000 members in Dallas, Texas, and a good friend of Maddox, was one of the invited. Asked why he thought he had been asked, Sheats responded in a personal interview that, "He (Carter) knew the election would be close. I was a friend of his speech writer, Bob Maddox." Dr. Sheats asked Carter: "Mr. President, with conservative evangelical Christians increasing in numbers, and knowing of your own deep personal faith, many of us wonder why you have not placed an identifiably evangelical Christian either on your senior staff or in the cabinet?" Carter responded that his Vice-President was a Methodist. Sheats said later, "We were surprised because generally among said group, the UMC was considered liberal, not evangelical. I was not satisfied with his answer. I do not know why he did not have evangelicals at his top positions… very few pastors were pleased with his answers."[1290]

Carter saw things differently. He stayed with the group for official photographs and left on what he thought were good terms.[1291] He wrote in his diary after the meeting, "I had a breakfast with evangelical leaders. They're really right wing: against ERA, for requiring prayer in school, against abortion (so am I), want publicly committed evangelicals in my cabinet, against the WHCF. In spite of all these negative opinions, they are basically supportive of what I'm trying to do."[1292]

[1289] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1290] Dr. Morris Sheats in a personal interview, 6 April 2014.
[1291] Memorandum of Robert Maddox to Carol Emig, 18 January 1980. Folder: National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast, Box: 107, Office of Public Liaison, Bob Maddox, JCPL; Letter from Robert Maddox to Guests at White House Breakfast, 21 January 1980, 1980, National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast folder, Box: 107, Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox. JCPL.
[1292] Carter, 2010: 254.

More realistically, Maddox knew that the meeting had not gone well for Carter. He later admitted that he had been sceptical about the chances of success, since several of the participants were "pretty much enemies of the President." Falwell, Kennedy, LaHaye and Charles Stanley from Atlanta had already done a lot of talking against Carter. Maddox said, "We thought we might salvage them. I mean they indicated to me, you know, they had open minds and all that kind of thing …. and I learned from that that you don't really change an enemy, a political enemy particularly, with just a breakfast.[1293] If some of the Christian leaders seemed appeased by the breakfast meeting, others like Falwell and LaHaye resumed their attacks on Carter almost immediately. Maddox said, "We went out of the meeting, and then three or four of them immediately began to distort the meeting – Falwell, Charles Stanley, Tim LaHaye, and James Kennedy. What they were doing, they were just kind of shading the meeting, distorting it, not lying about it, but distorting it."[1294]

After the meeting, Falwell brought up the gay rights issue, accusing Carter of trying to get homosexual voters on his side by approving of their "sinful" lifestyle.[1295] When he later left the White House, Maddox looked back at this period and said of the breakfast meeting: "… by the time I got here, he (Carter) was in such deep trouble with the more conservative groups that I spent most of my time trying to put out the fires – unsuccessfully most of the time – put out the fires among the conservatives who were, by then, really deeply set against Jimmy Carter."[1296]

Evangelical Reaction to Gay Rights During Carter's Presidency

Conservative Christians and evangelical campaigners such as Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly and LaHaye who worried about the growing visibility of gay activists and advances towards gay

[1293] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1294] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1295] Guth, 1983: 44.
[1296] Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.

rights during Carter's presidency, began making strong statements against homosexuality. These fed the anxiety of ordinary Americans who often felt that they did not know any homosexuals, and perceived homosexuality as a direct threat to their children, their families, and American society.

Jimmy Creech, a former United Methodist minister and important LGBT activist, an expert on religiously based discrimination, spoke to the author about his opinion regarding the evangelical right's aggression towards homosexuality and the reasons behind it, "There are a number of reasons for the evangelical right's obsession with homosexuality. They have always been obsessed with sexuality and the role it plays in a patriarchal culture. Same-gender loving relationships threaten the patriarchal social order it believes to be fundamental to God's intended plan for society. In addition, any change to the conventional teaching that the Bible teaches that homosexuality is sinful/an abomination threatens all other fundamental beliefs defended by claims about what the Bible teaches. So, homosexuality threatens the patriarchal social order and biblical authority, which are of course related."[1297]

LaHaye and other strong critics gave greater impetus to the right wing movements agitating against change in this area. In *Unhappy Gays*, published in 1978, LaHaye claimed: "The homosexual community, by militancy and secret political manoeuvring, is designing a program to increase the tidal wave of homosexuality that will drown our children in a polluted sea of sexual perversion – and will eventually destroy America as it did Rome, Greece, Pompeii, and Sodom."[1298] LaHaye asserted that the antichrist would probably be a homosexual man, drawing his inference from the fact that growing visibility of homosexuals.[1299] For people like LaHaye and his followers, fighting the cause of rights for homosexuals was a fight against evil itself.

[1297] Jimmy Creech in a personal interview, 11 June 2014.
[1298] LaHaye, 1978: 179.
[1299] Durrough Smith, 2014: 48.

In the anti-gay vanguard was Christian Voice, which issued a series of apocalyptic pronouncements, claiming, for example, that "homosexuals are rampant in our schools, in our government and even in many churches." Highlighting gays, abortion, the ERA and pornography, leaders said, "We believe that America's rapid decline as a world power is the direct result of these things." Christian Voice's activities were taken seriously by their opponents. Steve Endean, Gay Rights National Lobby representative, said, "This is probably the most significant threat to gay progress on issues before the Congress that we've faced." He noted that "Christian Voice claims it will have a million members and five million letter writers within the year, and I believe they can do it. It is letters from congressional districts that really hit the Members (of Congress) when they vote."[1300]

Falwell, too, became increasingly anti-homosexual during Carter's presidency and his organisation included some who even believed that homosexuals should be executed. Falwell often repeated that "God created Adam and Eve in that garden, not Adam and Steve."[1301] A 1980 mailing by the Moral Majority sought funds to fight against a gay rights bill in Congress. It carried the slogan, "Let's stop homosexuals once and for all."[1302] His rhetoric, while aimed at blocking any extension of gay rights, betrayed an apparent hatred and fear of homosexual persons. Moral Majority pastor, David Rhodenhizer, declared, "we love homosexuals, but we hate their sin."[1303]

However, Falwell wanted a world where a gay person was joke material not a threat to his conception of American life. In a sermon that he published in 1978, he wrote fondly of the past, when homosexuality was not an accepted topic of polite conversation, and also referred to his shock at just how substantial and organised the gay-rights movement was,

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[1300] *The Blade,* '1 March 1979: 4, 'Christian Lobby Underway."
[1301] Amis (*The New York Times*), 7 December 1980: 1, "Burgess at his Best."; Sullivan (*The New York Times*), 11 November 1980: 2, Falwell Warns Jersey Liberals at Capitol Rally."
[1302] Rosenfeld (*The Washington Post*), 24 August 1980: H1, "The New Moral America And the War of the Religicos."
[1303] Neil (*The Washington Post*), 3 November 1980: D1, "Politics in the Pulpit."

saying: “In my age, we laughed at queers, fairies and anyone who was thought to be a homosexual. It was a hideous thing and no one talked about it, much less ever confessed to being a homosexual. Now they are coming out of the closet… On June 26, 1977, on Fifth Avenue in New York, a demonstration for gay rights was held. The marchers in that demonstration formed a front, curb to curb, 28 blocks long, and included lesbian and homosexual groups from the surrounding area. It was called the longest parade for homosexual rights in New York’s history. That frightens me because when they come out of the closets, they are a much larger group than we expected.”[1304] Falwell’s Moral Majority also encompassed some very aggressive views, including a campaign that stated its goal as having “the death penalty instituted as the standard punishment for being homosexual.”[1305]

On November 27, 1978, Harvey Milk, the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in the United States, was shot dead in San Francisco. Falwell saw this as the judgement of God, saying, “Without question, San Francisco is undergoing a judgement from God today.”[1306] This view was repeated throughout right-wing Christian circles. One of the jurors who had heard the case against Milk’s murderer stated his view that it was “God’s will.”[1307] When indignant homosexual activists protested, many churches responded with a modified stance, which was that God did not hate homosexuals *per se*, but that they had been “blinded by Satan.” A growing numbers of churches established “counselling centres” intended to help homosexuals to recover from what was seen as an illness, and to repent of their sins.[1308]

Even Falwell showed evidence of modifying his views. In August 1980 he said in an interview, “I think we can certainly be for the civil rights of homosexuals without condoning

[1304] Falwell, 1978: 70-2.
[1305] Rimmerman, 2002: 126.
[1306] Flippen, 2011: 194.
[1307] Kalman, 2010: 249.
[1308] Flippen, 2011: 194.

their life style . . . I have no objection to a homosexual teaching in the public classroom as long as that homosexual is not flaunting his life style or soliciting students. I would say the same about a promiscuous heterosexual . . . ."[1309] Nevertheless, Phyllis Schlafly maintained her position as a major political force against not only gay rights but feminism and almost any progressive movement. She believed that passage of the ERA would lead to abortions funded by the state, homosexual teachers in schools and women forced to join the military.[1310] Very often she had attacked Carter's liberal policies including those of gay rights.[1311] In October 1979, she accused him of ignoring the anti-ERA movement in the belief that its inadequate media coverage reflected weakness. She said, "He has a no-talk policy, all the information (Carter) gets is pro-ERA."[1312] Like many religious right-wing activists, Schlafly tended to conflate feminism and homosexuality and present them as essentially the same thing.[1313]

In a personal interview, Louie Crew recalled an occasion in 1977 when Anita Bryant was invited to speak by the local Lion's Club, which was well-known for its anti-Semitic views. On this occasion, the local Jewish and gay communities got together to protest: "I remember when the local Rabbi in Macon, Georgia, called me and said, 'I see that Anita is coming to speak in Macon, can you organize the gay community to join the Jewish community to protest and to picket and of course we carried that off with great panache.' He pointed out that the Lion's Club that chose Bryant to come and give her talk there was the most anti-Semitic of the organizations and quite a few people showed up to join our protest."[1314]

[1309] Rosenfeld (*The Washington Post*), 24 August 1980: H1, "The New Moral America And the War of the Religicos."
[1310] *Time*, 3 July 1978, "Nation: Anti-ERA Evangelist Wins Again."
[1311] Komisar (*The Nation*), 10 December 1977: 627, "Feminism as National Politics."
[1312] Omang (*The Washington Post*), 14 October 1979: 10, "Carter, Kennedy Ignoring ERA Foes, Schlafly says."
[1313] Taranto, 2010: 160.
[1314] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.

Encouraged by their win in Dade County and by support from religious conservatives like Schlafly, Bryant, LaHaye and Falwell, anti-gay activists stepped up their fight, resulting in the passage of anti-gay initiatives in several states. For example, in Oklahoma and Arkansas, legislators banned gay men and lesbians from teaching in public schools.[1315] Steadily, the anti-gay movement acquired considerable expertise in direct democracy. The Reverend Robert Grant of the American Christian Cause used a mail-out to ask for money, conflating homosexuality, child pornography and abortion. He claimed, "These gays are trying to shove their perverted lifestyle down our throats, and when they don't get their way, they lash out."[1316]

Other Religious Voices

While virtually all of the anti-gay rights groups self-identified as religious, not all of the religious groups in the United States self-identified as being anti-gay. In fact, apart from the small number of specifically gay ministries, various churches stated their support for movements endorsing fair employment rights for homosexuals. These included the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the United Presbyterian Church, the Roman Catholic Maryknoll Order, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Presbyterian Church in the United States.[1317] At its General Synod, the United Church of Christ passed a resolution which rejected "the use of scripture to generate hatred and violation of civil rights of gay and bisexual persons."[1318] Furthermore, there were various supportive organisations such as Integrity, a gay and lesbian organisation for Episcopalians founded in 1975 that, while small, maintained an active voice and presence, with similar groups among "Lutherans,

[1315] Heffernan, 2013: 21.
[1316] *American Christian Cause*. n.d. "How do you stand on the 'Gay Rights' Issue?" NGTF records, Box 148, Folder 56, CU.
[1317] Capitol Hill, the Newsletter of the Gay Rights National Lobby, vol. 2, no. 1, Gay -- Homosexuals, (6/1/80-10/10/80), 06/01/1980 - 10/10/1980, Container 7. JCPL.
[1318] Hyer (*The Washington Post*), 6 July 1977: 8, "Church Resolution Affirms Support for Gay Rights."

Presbyterians, Quakers, American Baptists, Pentecostals, Unitarians, and members of the United Church of Christ."[1319]

Towards the end of his presidency, Carter received communications from various religious authorities who had read that he was considering proposing legislation that would ban discrimination against homosexuals in federal employment, following the presentation of a petition demanding such changes (discussed below) in December, 1979. For example, Edmond Browning, the Episcopal Bishop of Hawaii, wrote to state his support for such a change, pointing out that the Episcopal Church supported an end to all such discrimination.[1320] These letters, part of a concerted Episcopal campaign, were copied to the NGTF, which had prompted the mail-out, and which answered each of them with a simple message of thanks.[1321] To the delight of the NGTF, most bishops chose to write to Carter personally, rather than using the NGTF's form letter.[1322] In correspondence between John Lawrence, the President of Integrity, an organisation for gay Episcopalians, and Charles Brydon, they noted that many bishops, while disapproving of homosexuality on moral grounds, nonetheless supported the elimination of discrimination.[1323]

While American Catholics were broadly opposed to homosexuality, they generally adopted a more compassionate stance than the evangelical right. In response to a letter from NGTF founder Bruce Voeller, Reverend Patrick O'Neill, a representative of the Campus and Young Adult Ministry, a Catholic organisation, wrote of his intention to communicate with the White House regarding his organisation's commitment to young adults and their gay rights (without specifying what he considered those gay rights to be).[1324] The Bishop of

[1319] Davidson Hunter, 1991: 91.
[1320] Letter from Edmond Browning to Carter, 29 January 1980. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 1, CU.
[1321] Various in NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 1, CU.
[1322] Letter from Charles Brydon to Frank Scheuren, 27 February 1980. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 1, CU.
[1323] Letter from John Lawrence to Charles Brydon. 26 January 1980. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 1, CU.
[1324] Letter from Patrick O'Neill of the United States Catholic Conference to Bruce Voeller, 4 March 1977, (NGTF-Religious Community) 3/77 (O/A 4498), 03/77/03/77. JCPL.

Michigan, Reverend Coleman McGehee, wrote to Carter to indicate his approval of the President's meetings with homosexual activists and the administration's move towards amending policies that currently discriminated against homosexuals. Copies of the letter were sent to O'Leary and Voeller.[1325]

Ironically, one of the effects of the uproar about granting rights to homosexuals, along with other liberalisations that occurred during Carter's presidency, was to help to heal the historic rift between American Roman Catholics and the right wing evangelical faiths. Homosexuality – along with abortion and equal rights for women – finally offered some common ground.[1326] However, not all Catholics sympathised with the evangelical right and its attempts to influence politics. Indeed, a number of Catholic leaders, along with their Jewish and Protestant counterparts, denounced these efforts.[1327]

CONTINUED PRESSURE, SETBACKS AND SOME DISSATISFACTION FROM GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Carter was no sooner in the White House than he came under pressure from evangelicals and gay activists alike to act for their respective causes. Vice-President Mondale, only three weeks into office, received an ardent letter from Robert Emmett Rygor of Gays for Carter urging him to ensure the President moved immediately to end discrimination against homosexuals.[1328] It was a time when gay activism was growing, especially in large urban areas. Many homosexuals were encouraged by this and by signs that Carter was willing to listen to them. The NGTF was growing in strength and enjoyed moral support from a range

[1325] Letter from Reverend H Coleman McGehee to Carter, 7 March 1977, (NGTF-Religious Community) 3/77 (O/A 4498), 03/77/03/77. JCPL.
[1326] Flippen, 2011: 28.
[1327] Hyer (*The Washington Post*), 7 October 1980: A15, "Protestants, Catholics, Jews Attack Christian Far Right."
[1328] Robert Emmett Rygor's letter to Mondale, 24 January 1977, (Gay Rights: Memos, Correspondence, Clippings) 5/76-8/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 08/1978, Container 4. JCPL.

of bodies, including the American Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists.[1329]

In March 1977, shortly before the White House meeting with gay rights activists, the American Psychiatric Association advocated "the elimination of all discrimination against homosexual men and women that is based solely on the fact that they are homosexual," and wrote to Carter pointing out that the Association had adopted a memorandum to that effect in 1973, when homosexuality had been declassified as a psychiatric condition. Copies of the letter were sent to Bruce Voeller and Jean O'Leary of the NGTF.[1330] The same month, the NGTF received a detailed letter from a Paul Gebhard of the Indiana Institute of Sex Research. Drawing on various sources, Gebhard asserted that about 9.13% of Americans were naturally predominantly homosexual in their affectional and sexual attractions, with the implication that they should be accommodated rather than discriminated against.[1331] The message from the medical establishment, that they had been wrong before and that homosexuality was not a disease or disorder, was not one that most evangelical Christians, or indeed most ordinary Americans were ready to listen to.

In June 1977, Mondale appeared at a reception for Democratic fundraisers in California to find it interrupted by activists demanding a firmer commitment to work for gay rights from the Carter administration. Mondale left the stage, drawing comparisons between the Carter/Mondale administration and the relatively more liberal Governor Brown of California.[1332] The same day, Rosalynn Carter was questioned on her views on homosexuality at the President's Commission on Mental Health in San Francisco. Repeating Carter's view

[1329] Letter from the American Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists, 4 March 1977. National Gay Task Force Back-Up Material (n.d.) (O/A 4499), Container 27. JCPL.
[1330] Letter from the American Psychiatric Association to President Carter, 14 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 145, folder 47, CU.
[1331] Letter from Paul H Gebhard to the NGTF, 18 March 1977. NGTF records, Box 145, folder 47, CU.
[1332] Broder (*Washington Post*), 22 June 1977. "Carter: Efforts to Court Catholics Gains Democrat Hit Paydirt Courting Catholic Vote."

that homosexuals should not be harassed, she deftly avoided making any clearer statement either in favour of or against increased rights for homosexuals.[1333]

On June 18, 1977, some 5,000 homosexual men and women paraded through the streets of Boston to mark Gay Pride Day. That gay men and lesbians should be seen and recognised as such was of major importance for the gay community, as evidenced by a banner which proclaimed "Lesbian Visibility: Women Hold Up Half the Sky." Also important for the parade was the participation of several gay religious organizations as well as non-gay organizations such as Heterosexuals for Gay Rights. Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis sent a telegram regretting he was unable to attend but offering his "best wishes for success."[1334]

At the same time, the success of the evangelicals in mobilizing conservative Christians was noted with alarm by gay leaders, who moved to improve their own campaign organisation. On July 11, 1977, Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller met with experienced activists from America's civil liberties movement, including veterans of black and women's rights campaigns. They asked for advice on how to co-operate and help one another to confront "common enemies."[1335]

Simultaneously, Carter and Costanza were receiving huge amounts of correspondence from ordinary gay men seeking reassurance that the President would act on his campaign promises.[1336] For example, on September 17, 1977, Carter received a letter from David Kotara, who highlighted the inconsistencies in pursuing human rights policies abroad while ignoring the human rights of a substantial national minority.[1337] In response to one such letter,

[1333] *Washington Star*. 22 June 1977. "FCC Orders Broadcasters to Heed Disabled, Gays." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 47, CU.
[1334] *Gay Community News*, 2 July 1977: 1, "Thousands March, Boston Celebrates Gay Pride." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1335] *The Washington Post*, 12 July 1977, "Gay Leaders Plan Strategy with Civil Rights Groups."
[1336] Various letters addressed to Costanza and Carter. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1337] Letter from Kotara to Carter, 13 September 1977. NGTF records, Box 152, Folder 46, CU.

Tricia Seagall, Executive Director of the President's Club in the White House, wrote to Thomas Hutchinson that: "While the President has not made gay rights legislation one of his top priorities, rest assured that he has not changed his commitment to help gay people. Although the party has not yet been able to reach an official position in support of gay rights, you may be sure that we are distinctly aware of the contributions that gay people are making to the Democratic cause every day."[1338]

By the end of 1977, the NGTF considered that the year had "witnessed many steps forward for the gay people of our county"[1339] and was cautiously optimistic about what else the Carter administration would achieve for homosexuals in America. In an article for *Trial Magazine*, Jean O'Leary summarised the achievements of the gay rights movement, and expressed the hope and expectation that Carter's administration would continue to make legislative changes in their favour, despite the increasing strength of the right-wing anti-gay activists.[1340]

The furore over gay rights in America had meanwhile begun to attract considerable attention overseas. In January 8, 1978, a group of European countries took out a large advertisement in *Time* magazine stating that if Carter wanted to forge a foreign policy with human rights at the centre, he should start by denouncing agitators such as Bryant, who were actively campaigning to reduce human rights for homosexuals.[1341] Gay rights activists were quick to respond. On January 16, 1978, the Dorian Group, "the State of Washington's largest gay civil rights and public education organisation," wrote to Carter saying: "we do not agree with the implication of the advertisement that you should not advocate human rights to our neighbours because homosexual persons are denied their rights throughout the United States.

[1338] Letter from Tricia Seagall, Executive Director of the President's Club to Thomas E Hutchinson. 22 March 1978. (Gay Rights: Correspondence) 5/76-7/78 (O/A 5771), 05/1976 - 07/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[1339] Letter from C.F. Brydon of the NGTF to Costanza, 21 February 1978. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1340] Jean O'Leary, draft of article for *Trial Magazine*, Gay Rights/Legal Position 11/76-12/77 [O/A 44990]. JCPL.
[1341] Turner (*Time*), 9 January 1978: 13, "Mirror Images."

We do agree with the signatories to the advertisement that something must be done now about the denial of civil and human rights for homosexual Americans…"[1342]

The progress on gay rights achieved under Carter by mid-1978 was not enough to satisfy some members of the gay community. On May 5, 1978, Costanza received a letter from Kenneth Kimbro, who said there were "millions of homosexual men and women in America" looking to Carter for support. Expressing alarm at the Dade County defeat and fearing similar situations elsewhere, Kimbro even equated what he described as the "persecution" of homosexuals in the United States with the Holocaust. "Surely not since the persecution of millions of our Jewish brothers and sisters by Nazi Germany, have we witnessed such gross violations of individual human freedoms," he wrote. "And, Ms. Costanza, like Nazi Germany, no voices are raised in protest… millions of gays and women in this great country are now beginning to question the sincerity of President Jimmy Carter's campaign for human rights… we find that while the President talks about 'human rights' daily, his actions fall far short of his words."[1343]

Another correspondent, whose signature was indecipherable, wrote to complain that "progress was slow." Costanza responded by highlighting all the meetings she had arranged with federal agencies and assuring him that things were moving. She conceded that "progress had been slow," but assured the writer that "discriminatory practices will continue to be exposed and eliminated — and the effects will soon be felt by us all."[1344]

Another dissatisfied gay rights activist was Harvey Milk, who had gained the attention and support of Costanza.[1345] In June 1978, Milk railed against the hypocrisy of anti-gay rights campaigners such as Anita Bryant and addressed Carter directly, saying: "Jimmy

[1342] Letter from Lamar M Faulkner and Virginia D Lambert of the Dorian Group to Carter, 16 January 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1343] Letter from Kenneth Kimbro to Costanza, 5 May 1978. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1344] Letter from Costanza to unknown receipant, 27 March 1978. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1345] Letter from Costanza to Harvey Milk, 30 July 1978. Folder Gay Rights, Box 4. JCPL.

Carter: You talk about human rights a lot. In fact, you want to be the world's leader for human rights. Well, damn it: lead. There are some 15-20 million lesbians and gay men in this nation listening and listening very carefully. Jimmy Carter, when are you going to talk about their rights? You talk a lot about the Bible but when are you going to talk about that most important part: Love thy neighbour? After all, she may be gay… Jimmy Carter, you have the choice: How many more years?"[1346]

Milk called on lesbian and gay activists to rally behind the cause of gay rights and insist that Carter start to deliver on the human rights initiatives that they demanded, drawing direct parallels between the struggles of the homosexual community with those of African Americans, and between leaders such as Martin Luther King and himself.[1347]

On November 27, 1978, Milk was murdered together with the sitting Mayor, Mike Moscone, by a former colleague, Dan White.[1348] White's controversial defence (predicated on the idea that his excessive consumption of junk food in the period prior to the murder had caused him to behave irrationally) led to his receiving a short sentence, which caused outrage among the gay community and elevated Milk to the status of martyr, while making the need for Carter to speak out more explicitly in favour of rights for homosexual Americans seem all the more urgent.[1349]

Following the murders, Carter described Milk as a "hard-working and dedicated supervisor, a leader of San Francisco's gay community who kept his promise to represent his constituents."[1350] He also stated that, "As supervisor, Milk had come to be widely regarded as a symbol of the aspirations of gay people to participate openly in mainstream politics and

[1346] Harvey Milk's speech at Gay Freedom Day, 25 June 1978, Gay Rights--Harvey Milk Speech & Letter 6/78-7/78 (O/A 5771), 06/1978 - 07/1978, Container 4. JCPL.
[1347] Harvey Milk's speech at Gay Freedom Day, 25 June 1978, Gay Rights – Harvey Milk Speech & Letter 6/78-7/78 (O/A 5771), 06/1978 - 07/1978. Container 4. JCPL.
[1348] At a party celebrating the defeat of Proposition 6, Milk had called directly on Carter to speak out in favour of gay rights.
[1349] Lindsey (*The New York Times*), 22 October 1985, "Dan White, Killer of San Francisco Mayor, a Suicide."
[1350] *NY Daily News*, 28 November 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 47, CU.

society at large."[1351] Tom Hayden told the author that "the most important thing I remember during the Carter era was the assassination of Harvey Milk and Mayor Moscone in San Francisco. Harvey was a friend, an ally, and a teacher. His leadership, and his martyrdom, were turning points."[1352]

November 1978 was a busy and critical month for homosexuals. Gay rights initiatives were rejected in Florida (the Dade County case) and in Nevada (where the opposition was led by Mormon authorities and a Catholic bishop rather than the more usual evangelicals). However, the gay cause was bolstered in Seattle (which rejected an anti-gay rights initiative to repeal existing laws that banned discrimination against homosexuals in the areas of housing and employment) and in California, where the vote against the Briggs Initiative registered a margin of 60-40.[1353]

Costanza's Departure from the White House

Costanza had been seen by gays as the person who could best advance their agenda because of the status of her office and her personal influence on Carter. She had not failed their expectations, working tirelessly to secure several notable advances for gay rights. Her efforts were recognised by the NGTF, which decided to honour her, along with the mayor of New York, Ed Koch, for their contributions to the gay struggle. On January 27, 1978, Jean O'Leary wrote to Carter's son Chip, asking him to attend the ceremony. She stated that it would mean a lot to both the gay community and their many non-gay supporters if he came.[1354] In June 1978, Costanza was given a special award by the NGTF for "outstanding

[1351] *The Advocate*, 11 January 1979, "Murder and Mourning in San Francisco." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1352] Tom Hayden in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.
[1353] *Christianity Today*, 20 October 1978. "Propositioned California." Box 152. Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.
[1354] Letter from O'Leary to Chip Carter, 27 January 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.

contributions to humankind" at a benefit dinner held at Les Mouches discotheque in New York.[1355] Carter did not attend, but Chip did.[1356]

In August 1978, an event took place that changed Carter's relationship with the gay rights activists profoundly for the worse. This was Costanza's resignation and departure from the White House.[1357] In April 1978, Costanza's desk near the Oval Office was relocated to the basement, her staff was reduced and so was her role in the administration.[1358] In addition, she had had to carry all her paperwork and files to the cramped basement area by herself.[1359]

A syndicated columnist wrote: "Since Carter is the great master of symbols, Costanza's relocation could be interpreted as indication that women's rights and domestic human rights have been diminished in importance."[1360] Costanza and Carter had clashed on various issues and she had even tried to influence his policy decisions in a way that must have been seen as her stepping outside the boundaries of her job; for instance, she had pushed him to take a less conservative stance on the matter of abortion.[1361] However, what had angered Carter and those close to him was her rebelliousness; for instance, she had publicly criticised him for his stance on abortion, and for not giving as much attention to the ERA as he had to the Panama Canal.[1362]

On April 19, 1978, soon after Costanza's relocation, Wexler was given responsibility for some of Costanza's duties.[1363] White House officials termed Wexler "the most senior and

[1355] *New York Post*, 16 June 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[1356] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[1357] De Witt (*The New York Times*), 2 August 1978: 1. "Costanza Resigns as Assistant to Carter, Citing Problems of Style."
[1358] For Miss Costanza, n.d. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[1359] Wooten (*The New York Times*), 4 July 1978. "Midge Costanza: Enduring a New Life in a Niche in the White House Cellar."
[1360] Mattingly and Boyd, 2013: 375.
[1361] Various *Washington Post* clippings, n.d. Costanza files, Box 11. JCPL.
[1362] Babrach (*The Washington Post*), 26 July 1978, "The view from the White House Third Floor."
[1363] Announcement of Anne Wexler appointment, 19 April 1978, Anne Wexler folder, Box 64, Gerald Rafshoon files. JCPL.

trusted" of the women advisers on Carter's staff. [1364] Wexler did not share Costanza's strong stance on gay rights issues, but she was very strong on women's issues, and pressed hard for the inclusion of more women in important positions.[1365] Further evidence of Costanza's reduced status became clear some six weeks later when she was asked to stand down from a talk show to which she had been invited so that Stuart Eizenstat, Carter's Chief Domestic Policy Adviser, would have more time to discuss serious political issues.[1366]

Dismayed by her weakened role, Costanza resigned on August 1, 1978.[1367] She was replaced by Anne Wexler.[1368] Shortly after Costanza's resignation, Marilyn Haft moved to the post of Deputy Counsel to Vice President Mondale in the White House.[1369] Gay rights activists had lost another very important ally.

In her resignation letter to Carter, Costanza wrote: "Although we share common goals and concerns, it has become clear that our approaches to fulfilling them are different. My own approach has been largely one of advocacy. I have sought to advise you on the concerns assigned to me and to present those interests and needs to you. There are those who suggest that I should have simply carried out your policies and not voiced my own opinions and ideas openly. But that was not my style, my experience or my interpretation of how I could best serve you and your constituents."[1370] Shortly after her resignation, Costanza told Helen Thomas of *United Press International* that she was "not sad. I'm not angry with anyone. No one asked me to go. In fact, the president asked me to stay. I have such confidence that what I have done is right. I still respect and love Jimmy Carter."[1371]

[1364] Linda Peek's letter to Tom Simmons, 16 February 1979, Anne Wexler folder, Box FG-73, WHCF subject file. JCPL.
[1365] Martin, 2009: 225.
[1366] Bachrach (*The Washington Post*), 26 July 1978, 'The View from the Ground Floor.'
[1367] For Miss Costanza, n.d. Box 152. Folder 49. CU.; De Witt (*The New York Times*), 2 August 1978: 1. "Costanza Resigns as Assistant to Carter, Citing Problems of Style."; *The Washington Post* (Editorial), 3 August 1978: A22, "Midge Costanza Goes."
[1368] *The Washington Post*, 30 August 1978: A2. "Carter Picks Replacement for Costanza."
[1369] Marilyn Haft in a personal interview, 12 April 2014.
[1370] Barbach, F. (*The Washington Post*), 2 August 1978, "Midge Costanza Resigns."
[1371] Barbach, F. (*The Washington Post*), 2 August 1978, "Midge Costanza Resigns."

Costanza had not just been a friend to gay rights activists; she had also been a strong feminist and a gateway for feminist activists to the White House.[1372] With her resignation, Carter lost considerable support from feminist women voters,[1373] despite his demonstrable commitment to women's rights and representation in government. For those White House staffers who had wished that Costanza would disappear, this was a source of jubilation. Her resignation was met by the general view that she had been effectively fired in the wake of a furore around abortion and Carter's views on the use of public funds for abortions for poor women. It took place just over four months after she had said that, "There are very few things [Carter] and I are not compatible about. Perhaps my commitment is a little deeper and stronger for gay rights… I have the greatest admiration for him. He is my friend and boss, and he has trusted me."[1374] In her letter of resignation, Costanza stated that she and Carter shared the same view on many issues, but that their approach to achieving their mutual goals was very different.[1375]

Leaving the White House, Costanza was "furious" with Carter. Professor Mattingly told the author that Costanza "felt like she got sacrificed by the Carter administration, and they used her as a token, rather than advancing the issues. She felt like he kind of ruined her life." However, Costanza never publically spoke ill of Carter and often defended his record on gay rights issues.[1376] In Seattle during November 1978, just weeks after her resignation, she "pointed out that Carter accepted her efforts to arrange a meeting with the NGTF in the White House and to nominate the group's leader, Jean O'Leary, to the International Women's

[1372] Memorandum from Jan Peterson to Midge Costanza, 13 July 1977, Abortion 1/77-12/77 [0/A 5772] folder, Box 1, Midge Costanza files. JCPL.
[1373] Hartmann, 1998: 225.
[1374] *US News* and World Report. 28 April 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[1375] Cordova (*National News*), n.d. "White House Link Resigns." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[1376] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.

Year Commission," and that therefore, "he must have some compassion for the gays." She also noted that Carter had come out against California's Proposition 6.[1377]

Years later, in 1994, Costanza was still defending Carter's gay rights policies and reiterating the huge importance of the NGTF White House meeting. As for Carter, she said, "I had a very close relationship with Jimmy Carter. And while it had absolutely nothing to do with romance, I felt a closeness to him, a friendship, a kinship, in which I felt, while he had brought to me new experience and knowledge and information and challenge, that I had brought to him — I was different than anybody he'd ever had in his life, even with my humour, with my friendship with him — I absolutely adored Jimmy Carter. I loved him… I trusted him totally."[1378] She pointed out that Carter was constantly under pressure from the evangelical right and especially from his own Southern Baptist Church over her appointment and her involvement with gay rights, the ERA and abortion.[1379] In 2015, Carter insisted that he was "in harmony" on the gay rights issue with Costanza.[1380] Professor Doreen Mattingly, a close friend of Costanza and her biographer, told the author that Costanza would not have disagreed with Carter's comment.[1381]

For the NGTF, Costanza's departure was a painful blow. The organization had lost an important ally in the White House and it was unlikely that she would be replaced by anyone with a similar degree of interest in their cause. They acknowledged that she had "delivered a lot more than they expected."[1382] The NGTF promptly wrote a letter to Carter stating their view that Costanza had been an exceptional public servant, their hope that her successor would continue her great work in the area of gay rights, and their sorrow at having lost her as a friend in the White House, concluding: "Millions of lesbians and gay men have been

[1377] Tsutakawa (*Seattle Post*), 22 November 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 47, CU.
[1378] Midge Costanza interviews to Dudley Clendinen, 1994-1995. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1379] Midge Costanza interviews to Dudley Clendinen, 1994-1995. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1380] Quoted by Doreen J. Mattingly, 2016: 112.
[1381] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[1382] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.

heartened by Ms. Costanza's sensitivity to the concerns of all Americans, including the gay community. We believe that her departure from her present White House position represents a great loss to our community, to your administration and to the people of this nation."[1383]

Officially, however, the NGTF remained bullish, stating in the press that they remained confident that the groundwork they had laid with Costanza was strong and that progress would continue. They cited the White House meeting as having "served as a prelude to considerable progress in ending anti-Gay discrimination at Federal level,"[1384] Bruce Voeller was quoted saying that he had: "… talked extensively with Midge since her resignation, and she expressed her willingness to continue helping. She's cultivated many friends and political contacts in her year and a half as Presidential aide."[1385]

Professor Charlotte Bunch recalled Costanza's departure, saying in a personal interview:

"It was definitely a slap in the face but I think it wasn't a slap in the face only around the lesbian and gay issues. It was a kind of a sense of Midge had represented his opening out to new constituencies so, if anything, I think it was as much if not more a slap in the face to women and to a more feminist perspective, and to a woman who came to represent a much more feisty kind of voice than he wanted. I think that we expected the issue to move much faster and the opposition (the evangelical right) was growing much quicker than we realised and Carter's own fears about his re-election, which were justified, he didn't get re-elected. But this was not the only issue of course; when he finally fired Midge there was a sense of that this issue wasn't going to go much further."[1386]

[1383] Letter from Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller to Carter. 18 August 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[1384] NGTF Leaders Express Regret over Costanza Resignation. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.
[1385] *Gay News*. n.d. "Costanza loss not fatal to federal dealings." NGTF records, Box 145, folder 47, CU.
[1386] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014.

Costanza's resignation was certainly a setback for gay rights activists, who feared a loss of access to the White House. The Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights wrote to Costanza thanking her for her work and acknowledging that she had "played a significant role in correcting present injustices in the military, prisons, immigration, public health and other areas of national policy."[1387] Joan Nixon of the National Lesbian Feminist Organization wrote to Carter to complain that, "as a lesbian and as a feminist, I deplore the events and personal relationships that led to the resignation of Midge Costanza on Tuesday, August 1, 1978. I feel that we in the women's movement have totally lost our access to communicating our needs and just demands to your administration."[1388]

However, as it turned out and we have already seen, the White House maintained its open-door policy for gay rights activists and meetings between the two sides continued to take place after Costanza's departure. Several important gay issues, like the Federal Employee issue, the Immigration issue and the Military issue, were dealt with successfully by Carter's administration long after Costanza was gone. Wexler, who replaced Costanza kept the door open for the NGTF and met with them several times. She also personally addressed some of the gay community's concern (for example the gay veteran's request). Ginny Apuzzo, who was one of the executive directors of the NGTF, told the author that Wexler was "incredibly helpful" to her.[1389] In February 1979, six months after Costanza's departure, Charles Brydon confirmed continuation of the relationship with the White House as he explained to fellow NGTF members in a memorandum that "the White House project" remains "the most important NGTF undertaking in terms of practical results benefiting lesbians and gay men."[1390]

[1387] Letter from the Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights to Costanza, 23 August 1978. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1388] Joan E. Nixon letter to President Carter, 13 August 1978. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1389] Ginny Apuzzo in a personal interview, 22 June 2017.
[1390] Charles Brydon memo. 6 February 1979. NGTF records, Folder 4, Box 6. CU.

Furthermore, Carter continued appointing to his administration and governmental agencies persons who were friendly on gay rights or were gay themselves, for example Ginny Apuzzo and Jill Schropp. Therefore, although Costanza's departure was a blow for gay rights insofar as change came more slowly, progress under Carter did continue after she was gone. The big difference was that there was no-one in the White House to go the "extra mile" in the way that Costanza had done.

Professor Bunch told the author about Costanza's departure from the White House: "I think it did make it hard for NGTF to continue the same kind of relationship with the administration because Midge had really gone out on a limb. Where there were people in the administration who believed in gay and lesbian rights and had started conversations on other things, I'm sure that continued. You know, if you were working with people in the housing and urban development area, I'm just using it as an example, and there was somebody open to those conversations it would continue. But at the more formal level it became very difficult."[1391]

More Pressure, More Setbacks and Some Dissatisfaction from Gay Rights Activists

A new special assistant, Sarah Weddington, joined the White House in October, 1978, to take on that part of Costanza's portfolio. She therefore had the task of dealing with interest groups, including the NGTF.[1392] Weddington was widely known as a supporter of feminist causes and enjoyed a highly visible profile on account of her role as legal counsel to Jane Roe in the *Roe v. Wade* case.[1393] Weddington reassured the NGTF that she would continue working with them, but she did not share Costanza's verve and commitment to gay rights [1394]

[1391] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014.
[1392] *United Press International*, 20 August 1978: A2. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1393] Weddington's biographical statement, Sarah Weddington files finding aid. JCPL.
[1394] *Arizona Gay News*. December 1978/October 1979. "Midge's Gay Rights Work Continues." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 49, CU.

Weddington's appointment was also seen as a blow to the evangelical right, as she was known, among other things, for her pro-abortion rights stance.[1395] Whereas, under Costanza, the office of Public Liaison had had an "open door" policy but was seen as rarely following through, under Wexler the main goal was to build coalitions towards achieving Presidential ambitions.[1396] This has been recognised as a significant shift in how the Carter administration dealt with special interest groups. From this point on, the staff of the White House had a new lobbying strategy for Carter's important legislative initiatives, involving direct communication with members of Congress, and the promotion of active coalitions between organised interest bodies.[1397]

At the same time, the NGTF continued to press hard for major reforms in the area of gay rights. Voeller and O'Leary spoke at venues all over the country to publicise their cause, but they were growing disillusioned with Carter. In December, 1978 they wrote to him, expressing their disappointment that, although they had been working closely with his assistants for two years, they had not been invited to participate in Carter's conference on human rights in Washington.[1398] At the same time, the White House prepared and distributed a document detailing Carter's accomplishments to date. No issues specifically relating to rights for homosexuals were mentioned.[1399]

Carter's relationship with the NGTF and the women's movement took a turn for the worse in January 1979. On January 12, 1979, Carter dismissed Abzug as chair of his Women's Advisory Committee the day after she and the Committee had criticized his anti-inflation programme, his proposed cutbacks in welfare programmes and increases in the

[1395] Ribuffo, 1992: 239.
[1396] Jones, 1988: 94.
[1397] Peterson, 1992: 612.
[1398] Letter from Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller to Carter, 26 December 1978. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1399] Carter administration summary of accomplishments, December 1978, Records of the Office of the Staff Secretary, 1976 – 1981, (Gay) -- Homosexuals, (7/20/79-5/31/80), 07/20/1979 - 05/31/1980. JCPL.

military budget, as well as other aspects of his administration policy. As result of Abzug's dismissal, several members of the Committee resigned, including Jean O'Leary. They described the dismissal as "a terrible mistake."[1400] O'Leary said of Carter, "he will pay a heavy price for this injustice at the polls that he has not figured into his budget."[1401]

However, just four months later, Carter regained lost ground by appointing to the Women's Committee, Jill Schropp, an open lesbian. The NGTF applauded the appointment and said it was "a most positive sign that President Carter has again appointed a member of America's lesbian community to his Advisory Committee on Women."[1402] O'Leary said, "It is my understanding that the Committee has been restructured to reflect constituencies rather than organizational affiliations, and I am hopeful that in its new form, it will be an important and powerful voice within the Administration, to reflect the needs and concerns of American women."[1403]

In April 1979, *Time* magazine's cover story was titled, "How Gay is Gay? Homosexuality in America." The article acknowledged the progress achieved in the area of gay rights over the last few years and argued that "homosexual men and women are making progress towards equality."[1404] However, in September 1979, Carter upset the gay community by nominating former Florida Governor Reubin Askew to be special US trade negotiator. Askew had earned the wrath of the gay community when he informed the Senate Finance Committee that he would not permit homosexuals to work in the Office of the Special Trade Representative, a Cabinet-level agency. What is more, he made no secret of his support for Anita Bryant's anti-gay campaign in Dade County in 1977. When his nomination was

[1400] Walsh (*The Washington Post*), 13 January 1979, "Abzug Praises President - And Then He Fires Her."
[1401] Statement from Jean O'Leary, 14 January 1979. NGTF Records, Box 6, Folder 2. CU.
[1402] News from NGTF. 10 May 1979, "NGTF Applauds Appointment of Jill Schropp to Women's Advisory Committee." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 120. CU.
[1403] News from NGTF. 10 May 1979, "NGTF Applauds Appointment of Jill Schropp to Women's Advisory Committee." NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 120. CU.
[1404] *Time,* 23 April 1979: 73, "How Gay is Gay?"

suspended, Askew reversed his position. In a written statement, he pledged not to discriminate against any employee on the basis of sexual preference in both government and non-government protected positions. His appointment was then confirmed.[1405]

On October 14, 1979, the first national lesbian and gay march on Washington took place. Citing reservations about the level and type of organisation behind the event, the NGTF did not initially endorse it,[1406] but overcame its reservations by August to throw its support behind the initiative.[1407] A crowd of 75,000 marched past the White House to the Washington Monument demanding a range of concessions for homosexual Americans, including an end to discrimination in employment and in the military and the repeal of all anti-homosexual laws. The first public protest of this sort had been held in 1965, with just a small number of participants. The size of the October 14 crowd testified to the mammoth efforts by gay activists to secure support, and, although they may not have recognised it at the time, to Carter's input in legitimising gay rights. One after another, the speakers urged Carter to take a much stronger stance against anti-gay discrimination. It was clear that, for Carter, who was hoping to win the presidency in the upcoming re-election campaign, the position he took would have a huge impact on who would vote for him – and who would not.[1408]

The religious right responded to the gay march by organising their own event, a "March for Jesus," to be held in Washington on April 29, 1980. A week before the march, CBS television aired a documentary that claimed that homosexuals had "infiltrated" politics in San Francisco and other major cities and posed a risk to ordinary citizens.[1409] The gay community reacted to the documentary with outrage, although some felt that its portrayal of

[1405] *The Blade*, 27 September 1979: 1, "Askew Recants Anti-Gay Remarks."
[1406] *It is Time*; Newsletter of the National Gay Task Force, Vol. 6. No. 4. May 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[1407] NGTF Press Release, 21 August 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[1408] National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, October 1979. NGTF records, Box 145, Folder 2, CU.
[1409] Bernstein, 2002: 555.

the homosexual community in San Francisco had been so ridiculous that its effect would be ultimately in their favour. Others stated that the electorate of San Francisco was too sophisticated to be taken in by what they saw as blatant false representation and knew that the gay community was a net contributor to San Francisco in many ways.[1410]

In the see-saw of advances and reversals for the gay movement, a major setback came in July of 1980 when the House of Representatives barred the Legal Services Corporation from spending any money "promoting, defending or protecting homosexuality." The House vote was on an amendment by Rep. Larry MacDonald to the Corporation's proposed annual budget. Steve Endean blamed the gay rights movement's own lack of professionalism, arguing that the New Right, as represented by groups such as the Moral Majority and Christian Voice, were out-organising gay activists. "Unless the members of the gay community are willing to support a strong, professional lobbying effort, we can expect to see more setbacks such as this one," he predicted.[1411]

CONCLUSION

Carter actively sought support from homosexuals and evangelicals alike, causing both sides to believe that he accepted their views and intended to pursue their agendas. As noted above, Carter was honest when he told evangelicals that he considered homosexuality to be a sin, but he was equally honest in his belief that homosexuals should have the same rights as everyone else. These positions led to a no-win situation all round, with evangelicals particularly unhappy.

Carter's reluctance to meet the evangelical right while embracing "progressive" policies sympathetic to gay rights, the ERA and abortion, led to a steady deterioration in their

[1410] *The Advocate*, For the Record. 12 June 1980. NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1411] Martz (*The Blade*), 24 July 1980: 3, "House Passes Anti-Gay Amendment."

relationship. Worse, Carter had appointed admitted homosexuals to his administration while appointing no evangelicals. He consistently turned down their attempts to engage in dialogue and ignored invitations to attend their special events. Evangelicals felt particularly betrayed since he was a Baptist himself and thus, they had thought, one of them; he was the candidate to whom they had given all-out support in the 1976 elections.

Disturbed by what seemed to be the growing visibility and acceptability of homosexuality and convinced that Carter's policies were leading to the decay of moral values in American society, the religious right decided to mobilize their forces in a serious way. Although evangelicals had organised loosely for the 1976 elections, this time they undertook a professional approach which led to the formation of several conservative religious groups constituting the "New Right."

What might have surprised the New Right was that many gays were also unhappy with Carter. True, their leaders were promptly invited into the White House and Carter began to address almost all of their issues, but for some activists, this was too little and too slow. They lobbied the White House constantly, pressing for influence and advantage, as did the evangelical right. Although they lost Costanza on the inside, the records show that the door was left open to them and Carter did not abandon their issues.

Ironically, both movements grew stronger during Carter's Presidency on account of his policies and became progressively more focused and adept at resource mobilisation. However, their fundamental divide, one favouring change, the other the status quo, remained unbridgeable, as it remains today. The gay rights movement was a continuation and part of the civil rights movement and attempted to achieve social change. The evangelical right was a reaction to the gay rights movement, as well as to other forces of the 1970s such as the women's movement and the campaign for abortion rights, and attempted to stop these changes. By then, its religious views and political ideas were inseparable.

Both movements were important to the development of the "culture wars" which exist in the United States to this day. Although almost fifty years have passed since gays and evangelicals battled over Proposition 6 in California and Dade County the warfare continues, with issues like abortion and gay rights constantly on the agenda of the evangelical right.

Professor Byron Shafer told the author that Carter clearly played an important role in mobilising and shaping the gay rights and the evangelical right movement. He said that Carter "embodied some movements of the period, as with the drive toward deregulation, where he led the way. He was in real tension with some of the others, most especially in the realm of abortion policy, where he remained a traditionalist. So this picture has to be marked as 'mixed', though Carter was clearly not a New Deal Democrat."[1412]

[1412] Professor Byron Shafer in a personal interview, 23 January 2014.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE 1980 ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the 1980 US Presidential election campaign, including the primaries and the Democratic Convention. Although the role of the evangelical right and conservatives Christians in the elections has been examined, that of the gay rights activists and groups remains mostly unexplored. The primary purpose of the chapter is to scrutinise the role of gay voters, while also reassessing the participation of right-wing evangelicals, especially with regard to the pressures Carter faced from them over his gay rights policies.

As we will see, in 1980 Carter actively sought both the gay and the evangelical vote, just as he had done in 1976. However, a lot of things had changed since then. Despite the fact that Carter had delivered more than activists had expected and even hoped, they were still not entirely satisfied with his progress on gay rights. On the other hand, the high expectations evangelicals had had for the President had turned to severe disappointment, and most of them were eager to vote him out of office. What was ironic was that one of the main reasons why evangelicals were so dissatisfied with Carter was his advancement of gay rights, and the increasing presence of homosexuals in public life with not only the tolerance of the President, but often with his encouragement.

GENERAL DISSAPOINTMENT WITH CARTER

By 1980, many Americans were disappointed with Carter. Although it is normal for Presidents to become less popular during the latter part of their tenure, in the case of Carter the turnaround seems to have been particularly dramatic.[1413] The President was struggling to

[1413] Sigelman and Knight, 1983: 311.

deal with a range of issues, including a worsening economy, rampant inflation and high unemployment, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution and American hostage situation. Although he had inherited a difficult economic and political situation, Carter was blamed for many of the difficulties the American people continued to endure. Moreover, in the context of a culture in which "manliness" and "vigour" were often juxtaposed with what was perceived as the "weakness" and "effeminacy" of liberal Communism, some saw him as insufficiently manly; too conciliatory, too inclined to listen to the other side.[1414]

Carter had reached out to Vietnam veterans, and had introduced Vietnam Veteran's Week (to be observed in May and June that year), but for many Americans his failure to rally behind the idea that all of the returned veterans were "heroes" and, instead, to admit that some of the things Americans had done in Vietnam were wrong, outraged many on the religious right, who did not appreciate his tendency to try and see the situation's moral complexity.[1415] *Wall Street Journal* journalist John Mihalec would refer to Carter a few years later as the nation's first "woman President" and said that he had a "true feminine spirit."[1416]

All of this contributed to a generally poor view of Carter as President in the media. The negative portrayal of Carter's domestic policy leadership became overwhelming in 1979. Journalists assessed that Carter's domestic agenda ran into difficulties in Congress because of Carter's apolitical nature. In this view Carter did not know how to persuade, coerce, cajole, or "wheel and deal." Journalists portrayed Carter as a problem solver, an "engineer President", a "rationalistic" thinker but not an effective legislative or public opinion leader. In George

[1414] King, 1990: 290.
[1415] Mattson, 2009: 83-4.
[1416] Mihalec (*Wall Street Journal*), 11 May: 1984. "Hair on the President's Chest." NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.

Will's revealing phrase, Carter was not a "muscular politician" capable of leading a "muscular nation."[1417]

Something else that had changed dramatically following Carter's election was the role of religion in US politics. Ironically, despite Carter's insistence on the separation of church and state, the message that remained with any would-be political candidates was that it was important to court and rally the religious vote. Professor Mark J. Rozell told the author:

"The trouble for Carter was that it was impossible to please these different groups while President. Groups on the Left became quickly disgruntled when his policies were not 100% aligned with theirs. That was a constant complaint of those close to Carter who lamented that many of their natural constituencies insisted on getting everything they wanted right away or they would abandon supporting the President. And that largely did happen and led to the Ted Kennedy challenge in 1980. And for the evangelical right, discontent with Carter's administration set in quickly given his support for socially progressive policies and abortion rights. Social conservative groups formed during the Carter years in large part due to the discontent with his policies. Leaders in the so-called New Right movement of that era reached out to such persons as Falwell to create a new conservative alliance in US politics that would eventually shift the South to the Republican Party."[1418]

THE STANCE OF GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS DURING THE 1980 DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

Although significant progress had been made in the struggle for gay rights during the course of Carter's presidency, by the time the 1980 election arrived there was a feeling among some activists that more could have been achieved. Their major disappointment was that Carter had

[1417] Rozell, 1989: 115.
[1418] Professor Mark J. Rozell in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.

refused to issue an executive order banning sexual discrimination in security federal agencies such as the CIA and the FBI, although he had implemented the Civil Service Reform Act which prohibited sexual discrimination and protected homosexuals in 95% of all other federal agencies.[1419]

On November 9, 1979, as the build-up to the 1980 elections gathered pace, the NGTF sent a questionnaire to all presidential candidates asking for their positions on gay rights issues. Of particular significance, they were asked if they would "continue the precedent established by President Carter of an open door to White House and Administration officials for lesbian and gay representatives?"[1420] The question underlined the importance of White House access for the NGTF. In their letter to Carter, NGTF officials asked him to commit to securing real change for homosexual Americans, reminding him of the precedent he had established in opening the door of the White House to homosexual representatives. The questions posed to him were:

- Would he continue to keep an "open door to the White House" for gay-rights activists, which they saw as one of his real achievements?
- Would he appoint qualified gays and lesbians to his administration and would he support a gay rights plank at the 1980 National Democratic Convention?
- Following the implementation of his Civil Service Reform Act, would he issue an executive order protecting gays and lesbians in federal security agencies that were excluded from the Act?
- Would he support any gay rights bill?

The letter stressed that while homosexuals represented a minority of the electorate, they tended to be politically active and his answers to their questionnaire would reach "about

[1419] NGTF press release, October 1979. "Federal Agencies that Discriminate Against Gay Citizens." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1420] Letter Susan Estrich of Kennedy for President to the NGTF. 7 January 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 150. CU.

two million readers."[1421] In his reply, Carter assured the NGTF that he would continue his open-door policy for gays and that he was open to appointing qualified lesbians and gays in his administration. However, he avoided taking a clear-cut stand on the gay rights plank, stating that a decision would be made "as the process evolves." He also avoided committing himself on the executive order question. He said he would "continue to explore whether other action is necessary, but no decision has been made at this time." Finally, he stated that he would generally support any legislation dealing with gay rights, but that he had "not yet committed his support to the details of any particular legislation dealing with this topic."[1422]

Also during November 1979, Carter discovered that a warning by Jean O'Leary that "he would pay a heavy price at the polls" for dismissing Abzug in January[1423] was becoming a reality. On November 27, an event was held at a gay disco in Washington to raise funds to support and elect gay delegates to the next Democratic and Republican conventions. The event was organized by lawyer and gay rights activist Tom Bastow, founder of Gay Rights '80, whose aim was to get more gays involved in politics. The star speaker was Governor Jerry Brown of California, who was challenging Carter for the Democratic nomination. He told an audience of some six hundred gays that he would highlight gay rights on the Democratic agenda and if elected would promote the gay position in a far-reaching way. Carter chose not to appear in person, but sent Michael Chanin, a deputy presidential assistant and a close confidante, to represent him. Overshadowed by Brown's physical presence, Chanin was booed by the crowd, which expected a top-level presidential aide. He struggled to make an impression, saying, "You have in the White House a President who is meeting with you, a President who respects you. I think we've made progress . . . we've begun to change

[1421] NGTF's letter to President Carter, 9 November 1979. Folder NGTF, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980, Box 7, Robert Malson Files. JCPL.
[1422] Tim Kraft letter to the NGTF, 14 December 1979. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[1423] Statement from Jean O'Leary, 14 January 1979. NGTF Records, Box 6, Folder 2. CU.

the attitudes of people." Even so, a heckler yelled, "What happened to Bella Abzug? What happened to Midge Costanza?"[1424]

To the gay community, it appeared that the Carter/Mondale campaign was not courting the gay vote with the same zeal it had done in 1976.[1425] There was anxiety by Carter's aides about meeting with gay activists at their invitation in Los Angeles for fear they would be hostile and would damage their campaign.[1426] In this respect, the outcome for Carter among the gay electorate mirrored the disappointment and disillusionment of feminists. From great (and probably unrealistic) hopes had come even greater disappointment. In this context, tangible gains for homosexual Americans during the Carter presidency were easily overlooked.

However, Carter believed he had a good record in the area of gay rights and moved to convince the NGTF that his achievements merited its renewed support. Writing to the organisation on March 3, 1980, Carter set out his successes and pledged to continue his administration's muscular policy of anti-discrimination; he pointed out that

- He was the first major Presidential contender "to openly discuss gay concerns."
- His changes in legislation now protected 95% of federal employees against anti-homosexual discrimination.
- Only three months "after the inception of this Administration, senior White House advisers met with representatives of the NGTF to discuss matters of concern to the NGTF … That meeting provided the basis for a series of discussions at all levels of the federal government … These experiences are examples of the President's policy to expand the involvement of the American people, including the gay community, in government. For

[1424] Peterson (*The Washington Post*), 28 November 1979: A2, "Brown's Support for Gays Brings Cheers."
[1425] Chibbero (*The Blade*), 20 March 1980. "Carter Statement Viewed as Retreat." NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[1426] Memorandum from Anne Wexler to Chip Bishop, no date, Records of Anne Wexler as Special Assistant to the President, 1977 - 1981, Correspondence, 12/79 - 2/80. JCPL.

too long, the doors of the federal government were closed to too many Americans. Jimmy Carter has opened these doors and he intends to see that they remain open."

- Carter was "committed to continuing his policy of appointing qualified individuals without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation."
- Gay organizations now qualified for both tax exempt and tax deductible status and those benefits were being used by groups throughout the country."
- Homosexuals were no longer barred from working with the Peace Corps or the Agency for International Development.[1427]

Surprisingly, Carter's letter did not list all of his achievements in the area of gay rights. One of the most important contributions, Carter's Review Program of Dishonourable Discharges, which had benefited many homosexual soldiers, was absent, as was the fact that for the first time the Civil Service Commission was considering harassment cases against gays, now considered within its jurisdiction.

The NGTF's reply acknowledged Carter's achievements, but also declared itself "deeply disturbed and dismayed" by the slow progress of its requests.[1428] In a press release on March 6, the NGTF published the contents of Carter's letter for the public at large and declared that "No other President has shown the courage evidenced by this Administration on the gay rights issue. We commend the actions taken so far and look forward to continued cooperation and momentum." However, the NGTF expressed disappointment over Carter's unwillingness to issue an executive order banning discrimination in all areas of federal government, as well as the absence of a response on the issue of a Democratic Party platform plank on gay rights, which it described as "a major goal of gay activists." The press statement

[1427] Letter from Robert Strauss, chairman of the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee to Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 3 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[1428] Letter from Charles Brydon and Lucia Valeska to Carter. 1 April 1980. National Gay Task Force folder, Box 7, Robert Malson files. JCPL.

concluded that "these reservations aside, the Carter Administration can point to a solid track record. Of the candidates, only Governor Brown and Representative Anderson have records as office holders while former Governor Reagan has a record of actively defending gay teachers during the unsuccessful 1978 California anti-gay rights campaign (the Briggs initiative). We believe that it is in the interests of lesbians and gay men and our non-gay supporters everywhere to carefully evaluate the positions of all candidates and make a decision on the basis of both performance and rhetoric."[1429]

On March 18, 1980, the Illinois NGTF issued a press release purporting to outline the positions of each of the candidates for the 1980 Presidential elections on homosexuality issues. Its take on Carter was inaccurate and deeply flawed. It said Carter

"promised that the federal government would reflect his commitment to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Since then, the White House staff has met with lesbian and gay leaders for the first time in our history. The IRS no longer denies tax-exempt status to gay organizations. But Armed Forces regulations have become more anti-gay since 1976. Lesbians and gay men are still harassed by immigration authorities and fired by federal agencies such as the FBI and CIA. In 1980, Carter has declined to support a gay rights plank in the Democratic platform, or to sign an executive order banning federal discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. No-one close to Carter has campaigned for gay votes this year. The Carter campaign has made no significant effort to involve gay people."[1430]

The release was wildly misinformed, offered an inaccurate and misleading picture of Carter and was entirely different in tone from that of the NGTF release just twelve days earlier. The fact that Carter's Civil Service Reform protected homosexuals in 95% of the

[1429] News from NGTF, 6 March 1980, "Carter appeals for gay support," NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 148. CU.
[1430] The Candidates on Gay Rights, Illinois NGTF, 18 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 141, Folder 14. CU.

federal sector is missing. Furthermore, Carter had made it clear in the 1976 campaign that he would attempt to end discrimination in all of the federal government, apart from the security agencies, since he believed that homosexuals could be vulnerable to blackmail which might threaten national security. However, change was taking place even in the security agencies because of Carter's intervention and in 1980 Alan Campbell of the US Office of Personnel Management had issued a memorandum which declared that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was now a prohibited personnel practice, including in the security services.[1431]

The greatest distortion and omission in the Illinois assessment, however, concerned the military and immigration. The authors of the Illinois press release seemed to be unaware that Carter had created a programme which reviewed all dishonourable discharges of homosexuals, turning several from dishonourable to honourable. What's more, Carter's administration went to great lengths to end the practice of excluding homosexuals from the United States. Carter organized several meetings between the NGTF and the Immigration authorities and supported a bill aimed at ending such exclusion while members of his administration held discussions with relevant authorities such as the Justice Department and the Immigration Agency to resolve the issue. When all of these efforts got nowhere, Carter issued a new policy directive whereby US authorities could no longer question immigrants about their sexuality, while such questions were removed from forms to be completed in order to enter the country.

In reference to the other candidates, the Illinois press release showed a clear preference for Senator Edward Kennedy, who was seeking the Democratic nomination, saying he was the only candidate who had promised to issue an executive order banning sexual discrimination in all of the federal government, while he had also involved many

[1431] Craig Howell in a personal interview, 19 March 2016.

homosexuals in his campaign. Regarding Reagan, it said that he had made a strong public statement against California Proposition 6, but during the Primaries he avoided the issue of gay rights and his campaign had made "no significant outreach to gay people." It said Reagan was the only candidate who failed to answer the NGTFs questionnaire on gay rights. It was clear from the statement, that Kennedy was the preferred choice of the Illinois NGTF.[1432]

As early as December 1979, the NGTF had begun pressing Carter to include a gay rights plank in the 1980 Democratic National Convention. On December 31, 1979, Carter's office made a series of detailed responses to a request from the NGTF that he commit himself to a gay rights platform. His responses itemised the many changes to the law with respect to gay rights that had been made during Carter's presidency, and affirmed the White House's view that Carter warranted the support of homosexuals in his pending bid for re-election.[1433]

Doubtless aware of the damage his concessions to gay rights had done to his standing among evangelicals, Carter did not respond very positively, saying that to do so at this time "would be presumptuous on our part with the nominating process at an inconclusive stage."[1434] Despite pressure from gay rights activists and from his own party, Carter remained reluctant to come out strongly in favour of a gay plank. He tried instead to play the same game that had characterised his engagement with rights for homosexuals throughout his presidency, and essentially subsumed the issue into the broader issue of civil rights for all. Eizenstat declared that Carter was supportive of a civil rights plank that protected "all groups from discrimination based on race, colour, religion, national origin, sex, or sexual

[1432] The Candidates on Gay Rights, Illinois NGTF, 18 March 1980. NGTF records, Box 141, Folder 14. CU.
[1433] Letter from the Campaign Committee to the NGTF, 3 March 1980, National Gay Task Force, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980. JCPL.
[1434] Letter from Martin Franks to C.R. Brydon and Lucia Valeska, 17 March 1980. Folder NGTF, (10/79-3/24/80), 10/1979 - 03/24/1980, Box 7, Robert Malson Files. JCPL.

orientation,"[1435] and Carter's campaign stated that "The President stands fully for civil and human rights for all Americans and I'm glad to say that includes homosexuals."[1436]

On May 23, 1980, Allison Thomas wrote a memo discussing ways in which Carter might be able to address the matter of the gay plank.[1437] Carter was in a tricky situation because Kennedy had gone on record as saying that he would support such a plank. If Carter did not, there was a risk that gay and other liberal voters would reject him and vote for another candidate. John Anderson (another Democratic contender who had reached out to the gay community) had come out strongly in favour of granting full civil rights to homosexuals, whom he saw as just as deserving of them as other minorities, such as blacks or religious groups, although he rejected the accusation that he "approved of the homosexual lifestyle."[1438] Carter's options, Thomas believed, were either issuing a "bland statement" in support of gay rights, or supporting a clearer statement, and leaking it to the gay community.[1439]

However, in June 1980, shortly before the Convention, in a highly significant move for gay rights, Carter appointed Ginny Apuzzo, a lesbian community activist, to his party's Platform Committee. This made Apuzzo the first openly homosexual person to be appointed to the committee. Carter would then also agree to a plank calling for an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and Apuzzo would go on to co-author it. It was the first time in American history that a major national party had adopted such a plank.[1440] Apuzzo would go on to play an important role in the Carter campaign's attempts to appeal to gay voters. She told the author, "I campaigned for President Carter in key states having large

[1435] *Gay Community News*, 21 June 1980: 1.
[1436] Freedman, 2005: 248.
[1437] Memorandum of Allison Thomas to Anne Wexler and Mike Chanin, 23 May 1980, Anne Wexler files, 1977 - 1981, Correspondence, 5/80 - 7/80, Folder 1, File 6. JCPL.
[1438] Weaver (*The New York Times*), 30 September 1980: A22. "Anderson Critical of Fundamentalists' Political Role." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1439] Memorandum of Allison Thomas to Anne Wexler and Mike Chanin, 23 May 1980, Anne Wexler files, 1977 - 1981, Correspondence, 5/80 - 7/80, Folder 1, File 6. JCPL.
[1440] Humm and Santoro (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 25. "If we Gay Men and Lesbians Stand Up."

lesbian/gay community populations. I refused to accept payment from the Democratic Party and instead raised money within the community for travel and housing in such states as a Texas, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania and California. Anne Wexler and Chip Carter appeared with me at least in one of these events to assist in this fundraising effort."[1441]

On June 12, 1980, *The Advocate* wrote a clear-headed assessment of Carter's efforts in the area of gay rights, noting that "the federal government has indeed opened its doors to gays in significant ways." The article also noted the great support the gay community was receiving in the areas of health; gay health clinics with a focus on reducing the incidence of sexually transmitted disease were now in receipt of public funding, coordinated by the Department of Health and Human Resources, which was also quietly ensuring forward movement in the area of supporting gay families (this despite considerable opposition from the religious right).[1442] Another article in the same issue of *The Advocate* also praised Carter's achievements in the area of gay rights, even admitting that his administration had "more done than said," and acknowledging that the President had not gotten the credit he deserved for his efforts.[1443]

After lengthy and tortuous deliberations, the 158-member Platform Committee, in agreement with the White House, voted on June 24, 1980 to include a statement that supported gay rights in the Democratic platform. Gay members of the committee welcomed the decision as a "clear victory" for their community, but indicated that the language was less bold than they wanted. However, when the Carter operatives warned that there would be "trouble" if the lobbyists pushed too hard on the language issue, they abandoned the fight. The decision not to carry the dispute to the floor of the convention was opposed by at least one of the six openly homosexual members of the committee, but more realistic heads

[1441] Ginny Apuzzo in a personal interview, 22 June 2017.
[1442] *The Advocate*, For the Record. 12 June. 1980. NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[1443] Bush (*The Advocate*), 12 June 1980: 2. "The Carter Administration. More Done Than Said?" NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.

interpreted the "trouble" remark to suggest that Carter's men might move to defeat the plank altogether if gay activists pressed their case. Gay leaders eventually decided a vaguely worded endorsement of gay rights would have to do.[1444] After Carter's insistence that the plank should not include the words "lesbian" or "gay," it read: "we must affirm the dignity of all people and the right of each individual to have equal access to, and participation in the institutions and services of our society. All groups must be protected from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, language, age, sex or sexual orientation."[1445]

Carter's decision to go with a sexual preference plank at the convention did not sit well with conservative Christians, many of whom saw it as confirmation that their President was a "lackey of the gay rights lobby."[1446] Their dissatisfaction is evident in a letter sent to Carter by Pastor B. J Willhite:

"It has recently been reported… that a representative of either your office or your election campaign… stated that there would be a 'plank' in your campaign [for the election in 1980] supporting the 'gay liberation' movement and 'gay rights.' You should understand that this position is inconsistent with a Biblical understanding of homosexuality and inconsistent with a Christian perspective. The open support of such sin is consistent with conditions that existed in Sodom and Gomorrah, not a nation which claims Christianity… in the past I have supported you openly because of my belief that you were a committed Christian … I am sorry to say that I will no longer be able to do so."[1447]

Conservative Christians were not the only ones who were unhappy: the plank decision eventually led to a split within Carter's backers, pitting gay rights activists against supporters

[1444] Martz and Chibbaro (*The Blade*), 26 June 1980:1, "Gay Rights Included in Dem. Platform."
[1445] Democratic National Committee 1980; http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=D1980; Humm and Santoro (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 25. "If we Gay Men and Lesbians Stand Up."
[1446] Patrick J. Buchanan ***(****Christian News***)**, "Carter's Pact with Gay Liberation," 21 July 1980: 15. Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.
[1447] Letter from Pastor B. J Willhite to Jimmy Carter, 11 December 1979, (NGTF-Religious Community) 3/77 (O/A 4498), 03/77/03/77. JCPL.

from the South. Rosemary Thomson, who helped lead the opposition to the WHCF and to the NWC, was one of the disappointed Democrats. She said, "The exciting thing about the Republican platform is that there is a place for pro-life, pro-family Democrats to go."[1448]

THE 1980 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

Carter vs. Kennedy

The 1980 Democratic National Convention met at Madison Square Gardens in New York from August 11 to August 14. Unlike the 1976 convention, 1980 proved to be an ill-tempered affair, with flare-ups between Carter and his challenger Edward Kennedy, and complaints from feminist activists that Carter had not done enough for them, all this against a backdrop of disgust and fury from the evangelical right. The gay community was probably the most optimistic. That it boasted seventy-seven openly homosexual delegates, including twenty-two lesbians, compared to only three declared homosexuals at the 1976 convention,[1449] was a vivid demonstration of the progress gays had made over the past four years. Hundreds more came to support the gay rights plank, further evidence of how the national discourse on gay rights had been changed by Carter's actions.

Tom Bastow of Gay Vote '80, which led the gay delegates' organisational effort, declared, "There's never been a national gathering of popularly elected gay people. The caucus earlier this week was the first one. It was a tremendous emotional high for all of us."[1450] Further proof of Carter's influence on the gay issue was that two delegates at the Republican convention a month before openly declared their homosexuality.[1451] However, as

[1448] Bennetts (*The New York Times*), 30 July 1980: 1, "Conservatives Join on Social Conference."
[1449] Keen (*The Blade*), 21 August 1980: 21, "A Look at the Personnel and Political Diversity."; Leavitt (*The Blade*), 7 August 1980: 1, "Convention Strategy to Seek Mainstream Power."; Wadler (*The Washington Post*), 29 August 1980: 17, "Lobbyist Finds Gay Rights an Uncomfortable Issue on Hill."
[1450] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."
[1451] Wadler (*The Washington Post*), 29 August 1980: 17, "Lobbyist Finds Gay Rights an Uncomfortable Issue on Hill."

we have already seen, the progress that had been made over the previous four years had created even more demands and expectations on the part of gay rights activists, who kept on asking for more and more. At the time of the Convention, thousands of gay activists demonstrated outside the hall, warning Carter by means of a large banner: "No More Broken Promises".[1452] This was despite the fact that he had not broken any promises; in fact he had delivered more than he had promised, and more than anyone expected.

Two intriguing factors concerned gay and female representation. For the first time, almost half the delegates were women, in sharp contrast to the 29% female count at the Republican Convention, and the Democratic Party had moved firmly behind issues of interest in particular to left-leaning women, including support for abortion rights and for the ERA.[1453] Prominent female Democrats had warned the party that, should it not support the issues listed above, victory for Reagan was inevitable.[1454] At the same time, many women activists were deeply disappointed by Carter, and were not backing him for re-election, while Kennedy had been ardently courting the feminists and gay vote over the previous few years.[1455]

Kennedy, who had come out strongest on gay issues, was in a number of areas ahead of Carter.[1456] For instance, gay rights activists in Miami, the frontline of the battle against Bryant's anti-gay campaign, now accused Carter of not doing enough to help them. Kennedy had committed to support the cause of gay rights, and won considerable support in Florida.[1457] Carter, who was gearing up for his attempt at re-election, and Kennedy had dramatic conflicts.

[1452] Block (*The Associated Press),* 10 August 1980, "Protestors giving Delegates Plenty to Think About."
[1453] *The New York Times* (unattributed editorial), 20 August 1980: A18. "The Storm over Women's Rights." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1454] *The New York Times*, 9 August 1980: 6. "Women Warn Democrats of a Victory for Reagan." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.; Bennetts (*The New York Times*), 5 June 1980: B9, "Women's Groups Warn Democrats They Will Seek Open Convention."
[1455] Bennetts (*The New York Times*), 9 August 1980: A14. "Democratic Parley in Contrast with GOPs."
[1456] Letter from Susan Estrich of Kennedy for President to the NGTF. 7 January 1980. NGTF records, Box 36, Folder 150. CU.
[1457] *Weekly News*, 5 March 1980: 1. "Pro-Gay Candidates." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.

Some commentators had noted that Carter appeared to be much more open and accessible to his supporters during this time than Kennedy, who mostly just asked them to "open their wallets."[1458] As it became increasingly apparent that the race was between Carter and Reagan, and that Kennedy and Anderson, were not likely to be nominated, gay Floridian voters, for example, grudgingly shifted their voting preference to Carter, feeling that Reagan was likely to roll back on the gains that had been made to date.[1459]

Similarly, feminists could see that the Republican Party was moving steadily towards a "family values" platform that was hostile to many of the rights (abortion, the ERA) they had fought and/or were still fighting for. The Convention also attracted considerable numbers of protesters from everywhere on the political spectrum. Ordinary Americans were unhappy. It was a time of change and many challenges, both economic and social, and people's patience was wearing thin.[1460]

Fifty-four of the seventy-seven gay caucus members at the Convention supported Kennedy.[1461] Nevertheless, he did not prevail. Carter received 50% of all the votes cast in the primaries, and Kennedy just 38%. Some who went with Carter said they did so for pragmatic reasons. "I made the assumption that Carter was going to win, and I thought there should be some of us working in that camp," said Richard Kaplan, a Carter alternate.[1462] Some were surprised that Carter had achieved the Democratic Party's nomination. In fact, even after Carter's nomination, it was painfully evident that the party was not united behind him. As for Kennedy, once defeated, he called for a more liberal party platform and arranged "a political

[1458] Lynn (*The New York Times*), 9 August 1980: 6. "Carter and Kennedy Delegates Offer Contrasting Pictures."
[1459] Losleben (*Weekly News*), 9 August 1980: 4. "Carter's the One." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.
[1460] Resolution Supporting President Carter, Memorandum, 5 October 1980, Homosexuals (6/1/80-10/10/80), Robert Malson Files. JCPL.
[1461] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."
[1462] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."

reconciliation to allow the Democratic Party to unite behind Carter's candidacy." He also appeared on the podium with the Carter family in a demonstration of Democratic unity.[1463]

Carter, too, moved to mend fences. His clashes with Kennedy in the primaries had been extremely bitter, to the extent that some of the gay rights activists deplored his conduct and regretted his victory. Their views were expressed by Jim Foster, a gay leader and San Francisco political consultant who had worked full-time on the Kennedy campaign since November 1979.[1464] Foster predicted that "Carter's whole effort at humiliating Ted Kennedy is going to cost him the election in the fall,"[1465]

The Issue of Gay Rights

With the gay rights plank secured, activists focussed on their other major goal: to make their presence felt, to become a recognisable entity nationwide and to bring their issues to the attention of the American people. Most importantly, they wanted to prove that they were accepted as a legitimate and respected political force by at least one of the two major political parties. Since the Gay Caucus (77 openly homosexual delegates, alternates and standing committee members) was the largest ever to attend a national political gathering, this should not have been a problem.

However, despite their numbers, the homosexual activists failed initially to make a breakthrough into the public consciousness. Tom Bastow admitted, "So far, we're not having much of an impact. There are a lot of groups here competing for press attention. You've got to figure some kind of strong angle to get it."[1466] In desperation, the gay activists pondered

[1463] Kaiser and Schum (*The Washington Post*), 14 August 1980: A1. "Formal Peace over Platform."
[1464] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."
[1465] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."
[1466] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."

nominating a gay man for vice-president because candidates got fifteen minutes for speech-making and thus national TV time. They realised this would be impossible when they learned that a recent rule change had upped the signatures needed for nomination from 50 to 333.[1467]

Even so, they were reluctant to let the idea go and with support from other delegates, including the tiny Socialist Party, they found a candidate who was not only gay but black, and who had no chance of winning the contest. This was Melvin Boozer, president of the Gay Activist Alliance and sociology lecturer on the College Park campus. He was the nation's first openly gay and first black candidate for the office of Vice President.[1468] In publicity terms, nominating Boozer guaranteed fifteen minutes at the podium; two persons would be able to make seconding speeches, while Boozer would get to say a few words in declining the nomination.[1469]

For a while, delegates were treated to the sight of gay rights activist carrying signs on the convention floor reading "Lesbians for Boozer", "Boozer for President", and "Carter and Boozer — a ticket for the 80's."[1470] Inevitably, the nomination was unsuccessful and Mondale was selected to run as Carter's Vice President. However, what disappointed gay rights activists and delegates was that the nominations received very little media coverage. Although D.C. newspapers such as the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Star* covered the event, the three major television networks largely ignored the nominations.[1471]

It should also be noted here that during the 1980 Presidential elections, the Socialist Party of the USA chose David McReynolds, an openly gay white man and a prominent anti-war activist, to run for President. Historically, he was the first openly gay candidate to do so, making the Socialist Party, the first American political party to nominate an openly

[1467] Leavitt (*The Blade*), 7 August 1980: 3, "Convention Strategy."
[1468] Leavitt (*The Blade*), 21 August 1980: 5, "The Nation's First Openly Gay VP Candidate."
[1469] Robinson (*The Washington Post*), 13 August 1980: 15, "The Democrats in New York: Gay Caucus Proud but Lacks Power."
[1470] Leavitt (*The Blade*), 21 August 1980: 5, "The Nation's First Openly Gay VP Candidate."
[1471] Leavitt (*The Blade*), 21 August 1980: 5, "The Nation's Frist Openly Gay VP Candidate."

homosexual person for the highest office in the land. Sister Diane Drufenbock, a Franciscan nun was chosen to run as his Vice-President. McReynolds told the author that his nomination had nothing to do with gay rights or gay rights activists; he was nominated simply because he was a member of the Socialist Party, and his nomination did not receive any support from gay rights organizations. It received almost no coverage from the mainstream media of the time. "You won't find anything in the newspapers," he said. This was not because he was gay, but because the US Socialist Party, like the US Communist Party, was very small and generally ignored.[1472]

Impact of the Convention

The 1980 Democratic Convention was another example of Carter's ability to render both the evangelical right and the gay activists dissatisfied. The gay rights plank dismayed its proponents because it lacked specific reference to gays and lesbians, while its mere existence angered evangelicals and other conservative Christians. Carter at heart was against a gay rights plank, correctly fearing an adverse reaction from the evangelical right, and he only agreed to it under pressure. However, despite his doubts, it was passed because he allowed it although he had the power to stop it. It would have been politically more beneficial for Carter to kill the plank. He was fully aware of the dissatisfaction that his gay rights policies had caused to his closest allies. By killing it, he would have lost the gay vote, but this was numerically small in comparison with the evangelical and Christian vote.

Historically, and whatever his reservations, the fact is Carter allowed the introduction of the first gay rights plank in the platform of either of the two main American political parties. For gay right advocates, the plank was of major symbolic and practical importance. It offered the movement the two most important gains which activists were seeking from the

[1472] David McReynolds in a personal interview, 27 March 2017.

Convention, namely further legitimacy and wider visibility. Once again under Carter, gay rights issues were brought into the limelight and became a front-page story nationwide. Clearly, homosexuals were now accepted in the world of politics, which recognised their demands for equality and an end to discrimination as fair and just. Inevitably, it had the opposite effect on conservative Christians, who saw the plank as further proof of the moral decay of the nation under Carter. Some went so far as to denounce him as a "lackey" of homosexual activists.

Evangelical reaction to the Democratic Convention

Following the Convention, the evangelical right was aghast that "sexual orientation" had been accepted as a factor that should be relevant to discrimination cases, and saw this as proof that Carter supported homosexuals, and was in the pocket of the gay rights lobby.[1473] Kenneth Bowden, a Baptist pastor from Texas wrote to Maddox, the White House's Religious Liaison, that he was "appalled at the fact that you, a Southern Baptist Minister, would condone the dreadful sin of sodomy by approving and encouraging others to approve the Gay rights plank." The pastor told Maddox that he should work to "reverse" Carter's position on homosexuals and told him that he was going to "encourage as many of the evangelicals that I come in contact with to vote for Governor Reagan," because he wanted "no part of such a whitewash as you put on homosexuality."[1474] Many similar letters, denouncing homosexuality and demanding to know Carter's position, flooded in.[1475]

In 1981, Gary Jarmin, an important evangelical activist remembered this period as a major rallying point for anti-gay rights activists, saying: "We were working on school prayer, but then we found that almost everybody was unaware of Jimmy Carter's support for the gay

[1473] Williams, 2010: 153.
[1474] Letter from Kenneth Bowden to Robert Maddox, 21 August 1980. Robert Maddox Files, folder Gay Issues, Box 8. JCPL.
[1475] Several letters in "Homophobic Correspondence" Files and Robert Maddox Files. JCPL.

rights plank. This is an issue which symbolized a drastic departure from Christian morality. Christians debate among themselves over school prayer, but when it comes to homosexuality, it is so clearly wrong that to find a born-again President supporting gay rights is a real eye-opener. That's when we really got the 'ohs' and 'ahs' and gasps."[1476]

THE1980 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Gay Rights Activists' Stance in the Election

Faced with an onslaught from the evangelical right, gay rights activists were involved in ensuring that homosexual Americans got out and used their vote. Professor Amy Stone, author of the *Gay Votes at the Ballot Box,*[1477] told the author that "some national LGBT groups did a gay 'Get out the Vote' campaign during the 1980 election."[1478] In November 1980, shortly before the elections, a number of women wrote to the feminist newspaper *Off Our Backs* to explain why, despite various disappointments, they felt that voting for Carter was the best choice under the difficult circumstances,[1479] while two out of three major gay rights organisations in Texas supported Carter's re-election.[1480] The NGTF and some smaller gay rights organizations also encouraged homosexuals to vote for Carter.[1481] In addition, he received a boost when the National Coalition of Black Gays[1482] formally endorsed his re-election in its November 1980 newsletter, *Habari-Habari*.[1483]

As Election Day neared, most gay voters seemed to conclude that Carter was their best option. Professor Charlotte Bunch, Louie Crew, Donald Hallman, David Mack

[1476] Bush and Goldstein, 1981, in Bull, 1999: 130-2.
[1477] Stone, A.L. (2012) *Gay Votes at the Ballot Box.* University of Minnesota Press.
[1478] Professor Amy Stone in a personal interview, 5 March 2014.
[1479] Somerville et all (*Off our Backs*), November 1980: 24. "Open Letter to Feminists." NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.
[1480] D'Emilio et al, 2000: 117.
[1481] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 17 June 2016; Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview 26 February 2016.
[1482] The NCBG was founded in 1978 by African-American gay and lesbian activists and it was the United States' first national organization for African American gay activists.
[1483] *Habari-Habari*. November, 1980: 10. NGTF records, Box 145. Folder 1, CU.

Henderson, Nancy Higgins, Jeffrey Montgomery, Eddie Sandifer, all told the author that they voted for Carter, as did most of the homosexuals they knew.[1484] For many gay voters, like Sandifer, Hallman, Higgins and Crew, this was in acknowledgment of his contribution to gay rights.[1485] Other homosexuals gave Carter their vote because they saw him as the "least bad" candidate and more likely to advance their agenda than Reagan. Professor Bunch told the author, "I do feel we also in 1980 voted for him because he was the lesser of two alternatives but there was a strong sense of disappointment that he hadn't done more."[1486]

That not all gays were happy with Carter was evidenced by a group named Gay 1980, which claimed that gay support for Carter had "eroded disastrously."[1487] Indeed, it is apparent that a substantial number of gays went for Reagan. Shortly before the election, Tom Bastow remarked that "gay people cover the spectrum of politics (and) I know a lot of conservative gays who support Ronald Reagan."[1488] Timothy Drake, the first openly homosexual delegate to a Republican national convention, said that Reagan "has the potential to generate goodwill in the gay community. He is not for gay rights**,** but he is opposed to all forms of discrimination, and that includes homosexuals."[1489] Finally, in the elections, Dade County, battleground for one of the most divisive conflicts over gay rights since the struggle began, voted for Reagan;[1490] although gay voters in the city largely supported Carter, despite their protests against him during the campaign and the pro-gay messages coming from candidates Kennedy and Anderson.[1491]

[1484] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014**;** Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 17 June 2016; Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview 26 February 2016.
[1485] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 17 June 2016.
[1486] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014.
[1487] Gay Vote 1980 News Release. 12 March 1980. Robert Malson Files. Folder Gay/Lesbians, Box 7. JCPL.
[1488] Peterson (*The Washington Post*), 28 November 1979: A2, "Brown's Support for Gays Brings Cheers."
[1489] *The Associated Press*, 15 July 1980, "Gay Delegates Calls Reagan "Fair."
[1490] Florida Department of State Division of Elections 4 November 1980 General Election Official Results President of the United States, Florida Department of State Division of Elections, http //election dos state fl us/index html
[1491] *Weekly News*, 5 March 1980: 1, "Pro-Gay Candidates." NGTF records, Box 152. Folder 46, CU.

Carter's Late Attempt to Gain Back the Evangelical Right

Approaching the end of his Presidential term, Carter and his advisors were keenly aware that he had damaged his standing with religious conservatives (although it is important to recognise that there was political diversity among conservative religionists, including the evangelical right) by refusing to put Christianity centre-stage, despite his own deep-rooted faith. This was particularly relevant in the context of a religious culture that was increasingly conservative and within which Southern Baptists were increasingly committed to biblical literalism.[1492] Pre-election polls gave Carter low approval ratings among almost all demographic groups, but his aides expected him to maintain his popularity with southern evangelicals. True, some born-again preachers had become serious opponents, but the fact remained that Carter was, unchallengeably, a Southern Baptist from Georgia. On August 17, 1980, six weeks before the election, Maddox predicted that Carter would do better with the evangelicals than many believed. This included the Southern Baptists, the largest of all Protestant denominations. He said, "President Carter will keep the Southern Baptists. I feel very strongly that he will do that."[1493]

At the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979, attendees were warned that, "we are about to lose our republic" due to liberalism in the churches and the tendencies toward communism and socialism in the federal government and in the larger American culture.[1494] The people involved in Carter's campaign for re-election were keenly aware of how organised and hostile the evangelical right had become. In a memo, Strickland wrote: "… the climate of the religious community is changed. In the last four years the fundamentalist right-wing elements of the church in America have become more organized, more vocal and much

[1492] Young, 2014: 480. 777
[1493] *The New York Times*, 17 August 1980: 1, "Ultraconservative Evangelicals a Surging New Force in Politics."
[1494] Newton and Warren (*Baptist Press*), 12 June 1979. "Pastors Urged to Purge Liberals." NGTF records, Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.

more solvent. The number of dedicated extremists is small, but their appeals to fear and uncertainty are increasingly effective."[1495]

The memo went on to detail ways in which the campaign could reach out to religious leaders across the country in an attempt to garner support for Carter's bid. The problem was that moderate Christians, unlike their fundamentalist counterparts, were not generally organised to the same degree as they had no goals to pursue, and, by definition, were less likely to become exercised about political issues. Under the subheading "suggestions for the fall of 1980," the memo compared the religious right wing in America to conservative elements under the Shah in Iran, saying that there were religious forces behind Reagan "every bit as intolerant" and affirming that there were many religious Americans in the "middle ground" who would be receptive to Carter's ethics and moral stand and who would listen when he explained the positions he took on controversial issues, including the ERA and homosexuality.[1496]

Furthermore, even though Carter had consistently stated his personal view that homosexuality was sinful, his belief in human rights for all and the separation of church and state prompted some right wing evangelicals to portray him as an advocate for gay rights. In March 1980, during the build-up to the Presidential election, the right-wing evangelical pastor, Bob Jones, and other like-minded ministers visited the White House. They took with them a petition with 74,000 signatures which opposed extending the provisions of the Civil Rights Act to homosexuals. "If the President is against homosexuality, let's see some evidence," demanded the Rev. Jones. He called homosexuality a "perversion" and urged Carter to treat it as an "unlawful moral deviation" rather than a "protected minority normal lifestyle." "We are here to tell the President that homosexuality must not become a protected

[1495] Memorandum from Phil Strickland to Robert Strauss and Hamilton Jordon. 16 July 1980, Homosexuality/Gay Rights, Container 177. JCPL.
[1496] Memorandum from Phil Strickland to Robert Strauss and Hamilton Jordan. 16 July 1980, Homosexuality/Gay Rights, Container 177. JCPL.

way of life, an alternate life style," Jones said. He declared that Carter, "who claims to be a Bible-believing Christian," was unfit to be President, and there was "no question that Ronald Reagan is the unanimous choice of Bible-believing people all over the country." A fellow minister, Rev. Bob Billings, said there were fifty-one million fundamentalists in the USA and all who were entitled to vote would support Reagan. Carter ignored the petition.[1497]

As the election neared, it became apparent that Christian broadcasting stations had become highly influential with evangelicals, and Carter's staff decided that the campaign needed a religious strategy. Maddox and senior aides invited the popular televangelist Jim Bakker to travel with Carter during the campaign and Bakker agreed. [1498] The climax came on Bakker's TV show when he played an interview he had conducted with Carter during their travels.[1499]

On August 22, 1980, Maddox sent a memorandum to Rosalynn Carter restating his belief that her husband should do an interview with a Christian network. This would enable him to show the wider Christian community the sort of person he was and to explain "why he had taken certain positions." [1500] Carter was reluctant, but on September 8, with the election just weeks away, Maddox and aides Powell and Wexler persuaded him to talk to Harald Bredesen, a Carter supporter and a respected minister in the charismatic movement. Questions about the President's prayer life sought to establish Carter as a regular, practising Christian, and references to gay rights gave him the opportunity to explain the decisions he had taken in this controversial area. However, the broadcast did little to heal the wounds that

[1497] *The Associated Press*, 21 March 1980, "Ministers Oppose Rights for Homosexuals."
[1498] Memorandum from Jody Powell, Anne Wexler, and Robert Maddox to Jimmy Carter, 9 August 1980. Folder: Religious Matters 1/20/77-1/20/81, Box: Religious Matters. JCPL.; Memorandum from Robert Maddox to Fran Voorde, 30 October 1980, Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox Files, 10/20/80-10/31/80 folder, Box: 102. JCPL.
[1499] Memorandum from Robert Maddox to Anne Wexler and Jim Free, 3 November 1980. Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox, Religious Liaison Correspondence File, 11/80 folder, Box: 102. JCPL.
[1500] Memorandum from Robert Maddox to Mrs. Carter, 22 August 1980, WHCF, Subject File: PR, Box: PR-86. JCPL.

his policies had inflicted on the evangelical right during his presidency.[1501] At the same time, Carter was not rejected by all evangelicals, with two of the most prominent preachers, Billy Graham and Oral Roberts, supporting him.[1502]

By late September 1980, Carter had given up any pretence of trying to court the right wing evangelicals. In response to Falwell's constant needling, Carter eventually burst out, "Jerry Falwell can go straight to hell," a sentiment that was hardly softened when he added rather unconvincingly, "and I mean that in a Christian way."[1503]

By October, Carter was not making any effort to disguise his exasperation with the extreme end of Christian conservatism, commenting that the Moral Majority "and others like them" had an excessively narrow definition of what it meant to be a Christian, and what it meant to be an acceptable politician and that he did not wish to see their views prevailing.[1504] Maddox asked ministers to back Carter and combat what he called a "fundamental threat" posed by the Moral Majority. "People are being duped," Maddox told about seventy religious leaders on October 8, at a brunch in Kentucky, and added that though the Moral Majority may not formally endorse Reagan, it is "teetering on the brink" with stands against the ERA, abortion, and rights for homosexuals, and in favour of a stronger national defence.[1505]

Carter also attacked Falwell in a radio commercial that was played by about 250 stations in the Northeast. The commercial said: "God doesn't hear the prayers of Jews. That's what Jerry Falwell, the leader of Moral Majority, backing Ronald Reagan, said recently in a rare moment of candour. Even after Falwell's comment Republican Ronald Reagan failed to reject the support of Falwell's Moral Majority. Make no mistake about it, these right-wing

[1501] Memo from Jody Powell, Anne Wexler and Robert Maddox to Carter, 8 September 1980. Subject File: PR, Box: PR-86. JCPL; Memo of Jody Powell, Anne Wexler, and Robert Maddox to Carter, 9/8/1980, RM 1/20/77-1/20/81 folder, Box RM-1 Religious Matters, Confidential, RM 3 7/1/77- 12/31/77. JCPL.
[1502] Schafer, 2011: 111.
[1503] Collins, 2012: 105.
[1504] Weisman (*The New York Times*), 10 October 1980: D14. "Carter and Reagan Comments Tangle Campaigns in a Controversy Surrounding Evangelical Group."
[1505] *The Associated Press*, 9 October 1980, "Carter Aide Assails Moral Majority."

religious extremists are part of a nationwide movement counting on riding into the White House with Ronald Reagan where they can impose their morality on the rest of us. The aim of these right-wing extremists backing Reagan is to purify America. We've heard that one before. It's the same crowd that challenged John F. Kennedy's right to be president because he was a Catholic. But we can stop them." At that point in the commercial, Carter's voice is heard saying: "I believe very deeply there ought to be a proper separation of the church and the state."[1506]

Falwell hit back by filing a $10 million libel suit against the Carter-Mondale Presidential Committee, charging that "the offending ad implicitly portrays Dr. Jerry Falwell as a religious bigot and has caused numerous listeners to perceive a thinly veiled comparison between Moral Majority and Nazism." The Moral Majority objected to the use of "purify," claiming it was a code word which "raises the spectre that the Moral Majority, like the Nazis, would persecute Jews if they were in a position of influence under a Reagan administration." The makers of the commercial, Rafshoon Communications, denied that "purify" was a code word. Eventually, Carter withdrew the commercial and Falwell dropped the libel suit. [1507]

On October 30, 1980, just five days before the elections, Falwell told a rally of 1.500 people in California's Capitol: "People are saying, 'You're trying to get born-again Christians elected to office.' That's ridiculous. We're trying to get rid of some." He then told reporters that he would not vote for Carter, but he avoided endorsing Reagan. "I'm not endorsing or supporting any candidate," he said.[1508]

[1506] Feinsilber (*The Associated Press*), 30 October 1980, "Moral Majority Sues Carter-Mondale Committee over Campaign Ad."; Feinsilber (*The Associated Press*), 30 October 1980, "Carter Campaign Drops Ad Attacking the Moral Majority."; *The New York Times*, 1 November 1980: 8, "Campaign Report: Spare me that old-time Religion."; *The New York Times*, 27 October 1980: 24.
[1507] Feinsilber (*The Associated Press*), 30 October 1980, "Moral Majority Sues Carter-Mondale Committee over Campaign Ad."; Feinsilber (*The Associated Press*), 30 October 1980, "Carter Campaign Drops Ad Attacking the Moral Majority."; *The New York Times*, 1 November 1980: 8, "Campaign Report: Spare me that old-time Religion."; *The New York Times*, 27 October 1980: 24.
[1508] Willis (*The Associated Press*), 30 October 1980, "Pastor Says God Opposes ERA."

The Stance of the Evangelical Right in the Election

Faith continued to be a major electoral issue up to and beyond the 1980 Presidential election. According to polls taken at the time, religious observance had remained stable and had even increased during Carter's presidency, despite considerable upheaval and the impression, widely held, that America was on a track towards secularisation and the removal of faith from public life.[1509] At the same time, leaders in the Republican Party were treating Falwell "as an influential lobbyist and the leaders of an important swing constituency, rather than the small-town Baptist preacher that he had been only a few years earlier."[1510]

While not everyone in the Republican Party embraced this close relationship with the evangelical right, in general the party line was to accept the growing association between evangelical religiosity and the Republican Party.[1511] When Reagan visited Falwell's Liberty Baptist College, he spoke the language of Falwell, supporting overt Christianity in public schools as a way to mitigate "the expulsion of God from the classroom."[1512]

By 1980, many of the conservative Christians who had voted for Carter in 1976 now said they felt "betrayed by the 'culturally liberal' policies of his administration."[1513] For many evangelicals, Carter's refusal to state that America held a special position in the world may have signified their view that he rejected the evangelical right notion of the United States as a special place, anointed by God: "… as the 1980 election neared, Carter's honesty and forthrightness [about America's shortcomings] were popular with neither the public nor the press, and many evangelicals wanted someone to confirm and promote the significant status of the nation, rather than to criticize it as Carter had done."[1514]

[1509] Benson, 1981: 577.
[1510] Howison, 2014: 78.
[1511] Kohut et al, 2000: 282.
[1512] Williams, 2010: 142.
[1513] Green, 1999: 157.
[1514] Smidt, 2001: 199.

The concessions that Carter had made to homosexuals did not go as far as they wanted, but they had come with enormous cost to him as a politician and they had seriously dented his chances of re-election as conservative-leaning voters, including Democrats, worried about what they saw as a break-down in American society. Many conservative Christians had become increasingly political during Carter's administration, and supported groups such as Falwell's Moral Majority, which was increasingly intimate with Reagan, even after a flurry of outrage when Falwell stated that God did not listen to the prayers of Jews and other non-Christians and Reagan appeared to suggest that maybe Falwell had a point.[1515]

The evangelical right and its allies were determined to play a leading role in the 1980 elections. In June 1979, the Moral Majority held a rally on the steps of the US Capitol, and 12,000 people attended to hear Falwell and a number of Republicans address the crowd, warning them to do all they could to fight back against the liberal forces in America. In September, the Religious Roundtable held a similar rally.[1516] Increasingly, the evangelical right characterised the Carter administration, in Tim LaHaye's words, as "un-Christian."[1517] Pastor Bailey Smith, who had roundly endorsed Carter for the White House in 1976, now turned against him, and even begged him to "abandon secular humanism as your religion."[1518]

By March of 1980 the election campaign was gathering pace and Falwell urged his supporters to organise a wide-scale write-in campaign aimed at convincing Carter to back legislation for the restoration of school prayer.[1519] A month later, evangelists Pat Robertson and Bill Bright organised a "Christian rally" in Washington, Washington for Jesus, at which

[1515] Weisman (*The New York Times*), 10 October 1980: D14. "Carter and Reagan Comments Tangle Campaigns in a Controversy Surrounding Evangelical Group."
[1516] Viguerie, 1981: 154-55.
[1517] Martin, 1996: 189.
[1518] Carter, 1996: 35.
[1519] Pamphlet, Moral Majority Inc., 7 March 1980, White House Central File, Religious Matters, Box 1, Folder 4. JCPL.

the widening gulf between the Carter administration and the interests of right wing evangelicals was addressed. At the rally, some of the speakers claimed that sinful behaviour, including homosexuality, was making the US very vulnerable to the wrath of God, which they felt was likely to come in the form of a Soviet attack. Carter had been invited to speak, but had declined to do so.[1520] Robertson, who had initially been impressed by Carter and had supported him in the 1976 election[1521] (although he later claimed to have voted for Ford) but who was by now deeply disillusioned, said that the rally was the beginning of a "spiritual revolution" that would hopefully "sweep the nation."[1522]

The voter turnout was expected to increase across the South, which had the highest evangelical population, while declining elsewhere.[1523] Again, the religious right did not baulk at using the language of civil rights to make its point. "It's like the blacks said in the 1960s," Falwell said. "And this time, we're going to win."[1524] Jerry Rafshoon, the White House Communications Director during Carter's presidency, was now running his campaign for re-election. Early in the campaign, aides felt reasonably confident about Carter's chances in the South. However, soon things took a turn for the worse: "then one day early in the fall, Rafshoon received a disturbing call. A preacher named Jerry Falwell, with an outfit called the Moral Majority, had spent massive sums on anti-Carter radio ads in the South. They were saying that Jimmy Carter isn't a Christian, and there are homosexuals in the Oval Office and all kinds of crap," Rafshoon says. "Rosalynn went to church one time and came back in tears - a bunch of women were picketing her, saying your husband is not a Christian."[1525]

[1520] Turner, 2008: 191-3.
[1521] Letter from Pat Robertson to Jimmy Carter, 12 January 1976, Folder: Correspondence File 10/20/80-10/31/80, Box 102, Office of Public Liaison Robert Maddox. JCPL.
[1522] Watson, 1997: 34, 195.
[1523] Diamond, 1998: 67; Neuhaus and Cromartie, 1987: 82.
[1524] Banwart, 2013: 148.
[1525] Miller, 2006.

The Moral Majority gave its backing to a group named Christians for Reagan, which solicited funds by direct mail, charging that Carter "supported the lesbian-backed, anti-family ERA and the goals of the Gay Militants - even opening the White House doors to them!"[1526] A fund-raising letter said that though Carter called himself a Christian, he did not act like one. Falwell contrived a stunt to highlight his opposition to sex education. He mailed out envelopes marked "ADULTS ONLY" which contained a textbook being used in school sex education classes. In an accompanying letter, he urged the recipients to look at the textbook then destroy it. Falwell sent one such packet to Maddox in the White House.[1527]

Increasingly convinced that they had a friend in Reagan, members of the evangelical right, and especially those at the very highest levels, invested both materially and emotionally in Reagan's election. They denounced Carter for failing to live up to their version of Christian ideals and, among other things, for "undue recognition to homosexuals, to a perverted lifestyle ... unreasonable privileges ... [and] popularizing the existence of this 'minority'."[1528]

Reagan's campaign played an astute game. Commercials attacking Carter for his relatively liberal position on gay rights among other social issues aired frequently, but Reagan's campaign could claim that they had no responsibility for the advertisements, which were funded by outside groups. Homosexuality was frequently depicted as one of the social ills that had been allowed to flourish under Carter's leadership, with Carter being linked to the demands of homosexuals considered by the religious right wing to be "militant."

It was the Moral Majority and groups such as Christian Voice and Christians for Reagan that financed these television advertisements. They ran in the last weeks of the

[1526] Putzel (*The Associated Press*), 12 October 1980, "Pro-Reagan Groups getting Tough on Carter."
[1527] Letter from Jerry Falwell to Robert Maddox, 1 November 1980. Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox Files, Folder Correspondence File, 11/80, Box: 102, JCPL; Letter from Ruth Bell Graham to Robert Maddox, 2 November 1980. Office of Public Liaison, Robert Maddox Files, Folder Correspondence File, 11/80, Box:102, JCPL
[1528] Shilts 1993, 368-369.

campaign, mainly in the Southern states, pounding home their favourite message: Carter was soft on perverts and associated with militant homosexuals. The ads came in the form of two thirty-second spots, one portraying homosexuals as ridiculous and repulsive, and the other playing up the perceived normality of a Reagan-style American family. The first ad showed bizarrely costumed men at a carnival, some of them kissing in a park. A voiceover declared: "Militant homosexual's parade in San Francisco, flaunting their life style. Flexing their political muscle, they elect a mayor . . . now the march has reached Washington. And President Carter's platform carries his pledge to cater to homosexual demands. . . Carter advocates acceptance of homosexuality. Ronald Reagan stands for the traditional American family."[1529]

In the second ad, a woman in a woollen cardigan sat on a lawn chair next to a wood frame house. Looking into the camera, she declared, "As a Christian mother, I want my children to be able to pray in school. I don't want them being taught that abortion and homosexuality are perfectly all right. I was very sorry to learn that President Carter disagrees with me on all of these issues. Because of this, I'm duty bound as a Christian and a mother to vote for Ronald Reagan, a man that will protect my family's values."[1530]

Carter characterised the advertisements as "very vicious"[1531] and accused Reagan of being responsible.[1532] Gay leaders in Washington and New York expressed outrage,[1533] and administration aides described the ads as "gross distortions that play on people's fears."

[1529] Morgan (*The Washington Post*), 31 October 1980: 5, "Pro-Reagan TV Spots Depict President as a Gay Rights Advocate."
[1530] Morgan (*The Washington Post*), 31 October 1980: 5, "Pro-Reagan TV Spots Depict President as a Gay Rights Advocate."
[1531] Weisman (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 1, "President is Irked by Religious Ads; Reagan Criticizes Billy Carter Case."
[1532] *The New York Times*, 1 November 1980: 8, "Campaign Report: Spare me that old-time Religion."
[1533] Morgan (*The Washington Post*), 31 October 1980: 5, "Pro-Reagan TV Spots Depict President as a Gay Rights Advocate."

Carter's assistant, Wexler, said, "They used an independent committee to sponsor the ads. It's a fine device to keep their own hands clean while their supporters do unsavoury things."[1534]

Gary Jarmin, national director of Christians for Reagan, explained that target areas for the ads were certain key southern states and southern Ohio. They were not shown in the Washington area, although some clips appeared on national network news programmes. He said, "We decided it was necessary to run these ads because our information indicates that the vast majority of evangelical Christians are totally unaware of President Carter's support for homosexual rights. We believe that there is no issue which will cause evangelicals to defect from Carter more than this one." [1535] In response to charges of Republican involvement in the ads, party spokesman John Roberts said the Reagan campaign had nothing to do with the ads or the groups that sponsored them, "We don't take a position on what they do," he said. "We're completely separate and don't have input with these people."[1536]

Carter tried to counter the evangelical right's gains by running an advertisement that once more drew focus to his profound religious faith. The text ran: "though he clearly observes our historic separation of church and state, Jimmy Carter is a deeply and clearly religious man. He takes the time to pray privately with Rosalynn each day. Under the endless pressure of the presidency, where decisions change and directions change, and even the facts change, this man knows that one thing remains constant-his faith. President Carter." Carter constantly made the point that "in our country, we ought to be able to separate church and state."[1537] However, he seemed to be missing the point. The evangelical right did not *want* a separation of church and state, even if it was "historical," because that allowed the state to

[1534] Morgan (*The Washington Post*), 31 October 1980: 5, "Pro-Reagan TV Spots Depict President as a Gay Rights Advocate."
[1535] Morgan (*The Washington Post*), 31 October 1980: 5, "Pro-Reagan TV Spots Depict President as a Gay Rights Advocate."
[1536] Morgan (*The Washington Post*), 31 October 1980: 5, "Pro-Reagan TV Spots Depict President as a Gay Rights Advocate."
[1537] Weisman (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 1, "President is Irked by Religious Ads; Reagan Criticizes Billy Carter Case."

permit its citizens to engage in behaviour (such as homosexuality) that they believed abhorrent and sinful.[1538]

At the same time, an independent group known as People for the American Way felt disturbed by the tone of the evangelical adverts against Carter. The group consisted of Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University; Martin Marty, a University of Chicago theologian; and former U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan of Texas. Just two weeks before the election, this group ran a series of three sixty-second spots to counter Falwell and his associates.[1539]

Even while gay rights activists were frustrated and angry with what they saw as Carter's failure to adequately address their concerns during his first term, right wing activists such as Falwell made much of what they saw as Carter's acceptance of gay rights and launched a publicity campaign that conflated homosexuality and its acceptance within American society with a whole range of social ills. A shock tactic employed by Falwell at his rallies was a ninety-minute video horror which beamed out repeated images of nuclear explosions, men kissing each other, discarded foetuses in hospital sluice pans, the face of Charles Manson and sex movie houses in New York's Times Square. The video was titled, "America, You Are Too Young to Die!" [1540]

By the summer of 1980, the unity among the evangelical right that had seemed impossible to imagine only two years earlier had become a reality. Fundamentalists, charismatics, and evangelicals were working together in a political coalition to take the nation. They all believed that the federal government was hostile to them; that the government in general and Carter in particular fostered the cause of "secular humanism," and that only a conservative political revolution could restore the country to morality. While some

[1538] Newman, 2009: 696.
[1539] Hampson (*The Associated Press*), 21 October 1980, "Group Plans TV Spots to Counter Television Preachers."; *The New York Times*, 22 October 1980, "Campaign Report."
[1540] Flippen, 2011: 291.

evangelical leaders had made polarising statements about other religions, others, such as Falwell, worked on building bridges between evangelicals, non-evangelical Christians, and Jews, seeking to find common ground against a common enemy.[1541] So far as the evangelical right was concerned, the right Presidential candidate would help them sweep to power.[1542] And the right candidate was not Carter.

On successive weeks in August, the publication *Moral Majority Report* carried cover photos of Reagan and Carter designed to show Carter at a disadvantage. One displayed Reagan conferring with Falwell, the other pictured Carter alone in an unflattering pose.[1543] As well as Carter, Falwell attacked Vice President Mondale as being a part of an "amoral minority." He said "Mr. Mondale . . . himself acknowledges being a Universalist, and his family roots are humanism. Humanism, in my opinion, is glossed-over atheism."[1544] Today, we can see this period as a turning point, when white evangelicals in particular aligned themselves strongly with the Republican Party.

In his determination to get Carter out of the White House, Falwell claimed that his Moral Majority had registered four million evangelicals who had not planned to vote at the election, and had mobilised a further ten million churchgoers who would not otherwise have been involved.[1545] He then went to new lengths to discredit Carter by ascribing to the President a remark he had never made. In an extraordinary and blatant deception, he invented a conversation he said took place during the breakfast meeting they had at the White House in January 1980. Falwell claimed that he asked Carter, "Why do you have known practising homosexuals on your staff?" to which Carter supposedly answered, "Well, I'm President of

[1541] Briggs (*The New York Times*), 11 October 1980: 8. "Fundamentalist Asks End to Religious Polarisation."
[1542] Williams, 2010: 184.
[1543] Rosenfeld (*The Washington Post*), 24 August 1980: H1, "The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos."
[1544] Brown (*The Washington Post*), 13 October 1980: A4, "Falwell Denies 'Moral Majority' Seeks To Dictate Nation's Moral Philosophy."
[1545] Anderson (*United Press International*), 5 November 1980, "Moral Majority: Out of the pews and to the polling places."; Frankel and Barker (*The Washington Post*), 6 November 1980: C1, "Virginia Republicans Now More Eager For '81 Election; Landslide Improves Virginia Republicans' Prospects for Next Year."

all the people." Whereupon, Falwell claimed, he cleverly riposted: "Why don't you have some murderers and burglars on your staff?" [1546]

When the White House challenged the alleged exchange, Falwell produced what he said was a transcript of a tape recording. He even said that this was Carter's attempt "to discredit evangelical ministers who disagree with him on many social and political issues."[1547] However, on August 7, 1980, Maddox produced a recording of the breakfast meeting and made the tape available to the media. It was immediately clear that Falwell's alleged transcript bore no resemblance to the authentic taped version of the conversation. The tape revealed that Falwell actually asked Carter, "Do I understand that your definition of the family precludes homosexual families?" Carter nodded and said, "Yes, I agree that my definition of a family does not include homosexual families." Falwell then replied, "Thank you. Thank you very much."[1548] It was clear now that Falwell had lied, and that he lied not reflexively on the spur of the moment, but by concocting an elaborate deception that included the creation of a written fiction. Asked if he planned to apologise to Carter, he said, "I am doing it right now." He then gave a rambling and confused explanation of his action, saying "I gave what I believed to be a parable of a president's position on gay rights," apparently suggesting that he was speaking metaphorically rather than literally.[1549]

Perhaps the most astonishing aspects of this affair was that Falwell had taped the conversation with Carter on his own recorder. Falwell had received permission to tape-record the breakfast meeting, with the understanding that it was off the record, and had even sent Maddox a courtesy copy of the tape afterwards. The tape which Maddox released to the press

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[1546] Clendinen (*The New York Times*), 8 August 1980: 16, "White House Says Minister Misquoted Carter Remarks."; Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1547] Clendinen (*The New York Times*), 8 August 1980: 16, "White House Says Minister Misquoted Carter Remarks."
[1548] Clendinen (*The New York Times*), 8 August 1980: 16, "White House Says Minister Misquoted Carter Remarks."; Robert Maddox Exit Interview, 12 August 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews. JCPL.
[1549] *The New York Times*, 13 October 1980: 5, "Campaign Report: Fundamentalist Preacher Makes Apology to Carter."; *United Press International*, 13 October 1980, "Falwell says Moral Majority not Trying to Control Government."

was actually Falwell's own.[1550] Falwell tried to back off and deny that he had lied, but faced with the evidence of his own tape, he eventually conceded that his version of Carter's remark was "obviously a reckless statement." [1551]

Fuelled by its self-image as a beleaguered minority in an immoral world, the evangelical right marked the final months of the campaign by staging rallies, workshops and seminars all around the country. The aim was to coach church ministers in the best methods of imparting moral beliefs among their congregations which would ensure they voted for the right, i.e. conservative, candidate at the election. Central to this effort was the Religious Roundtable supported by television evangelists, politicians and some wealthy business leaders.

One such event, in Dallas on August 21, 1980, brought together a crowd of 22,000, plus Reagan. Carter declined an invitation to attend. According to Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post,* this was either because Carter "was troubled" by the event's "message" denouncing homosexuality, the school prayer ban, abortion, divorce, evolution, etc., or it was "simply because he was not particularly wanted."[1552] The predominantly white, middle-class crowd, including 7,000 ministers from forty-one states and 15,000 lay believers, shouted "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord," as speaker after speaker attacked the usual targets of the Christian right, namely abortion, homosexuality and the ERA.[1553] The Rev. W.A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, which boasted 20,000 members, denounced proposals to give rights to homosexuals, while the Rev. E.V. Hill, pastor of a Baptist church in Los Angeles, called for Christians to speak out against moral decay, evoking a roaring

[1550] Clendinen (*The New York Times*), 8 August 1980: 16, "White House Says Minister Misquoted Carter Remarks."
[1551] Meyer et all (*Newsweek*), 15 September 1980: 28, "A Tide of Born-Again Politics."; *The New York Times,* 13 October 1980: 5, "Campaign Report: Fundamentalist Preacher Makes Apology to Carter."
[1552] Cohen (*The Washington Post*), 2 September 1980: C1. "New Time Religion: Forgetting Civil Rights*."*
[1553] *The New York Times,* 17 August 1980: 1, "Ultraconservative Evangelicals a Surging New Force in Politics."; Briggs (*The New York Times*), 21 August, 1980: 9, "Evangelical Preachers Gather to Polish their Politics."

response. Schlafly declared, that "the devil is using one word, sex, to take away the rights of wives and give them to homosexuals. The ERA doesn't give women rights, it puts sex into the Constitution."[1554]

When Reagan spoke, he made no mention of homosexual rights, abortion or the ERA, but he told the crowd, "I understand this is a non-partisan conference and you can't give me your endorsement, so I give you mine."[1555] This was just one of the many cues that led the evangelical right to understand that Reagan was singing from the same hymn sheet.

By the time of Carter's second Presidential campaign, the religious right had developed a sense of "being an unpopular minority in an increasingly hostile society" and had become intensively defensive and political, frequently expressing its horror at social changes including, "the increased permissiveness of heterosexuals, the openness of gays and lesbians, the legalization of abortion and pornography, and challenges to the nuclear family," as well as being "upset by a decreased respect for religious institutions and restrictions on religious expression in public life."[1556]

They felt that they alone were standing up for values and certainties that had once been taken for granted in America and they showed that they were not immune from using the language of the civil rights and gay rights movement in presenting themselves as a long-ignored and even downtrodden group that was finally learning how to stand up for itself. Carter had presented America with a vision of a future involving humility and an acceptance of mistakes made in the past (such as the mistakes made in and around the Vietnam War) but right wing Americans, particularly the evangelical right, were not receptive to this message, preferring the bluster and certainty of people like Falwell.[1557] Bruce Wilkinson, President of

[1554] Herbaugh (*The Associated Press*), 22 August 1980, "Christians Urged to Get Involved in Politics."
[1555] Herbaugh (*The Associated Press*), 23 August 1980, "Preachers Return Home To Promote Revival At the Ballot Box."; Sawyer (*The Washington Post*), 23 August 1980: A1, "Reagan Sticks To Stand on Taiwan Ties."
[1556] Green, 1999: 156.
[1557] Mattson, 2009: 183.

Walk through the Bible Ministries, was quoted as saying: "Evangelicals in the past have been quiet, almost like an underground. I believe issues like homosexuality, abortion and military defence have become public issues and evangelicals have decided that it's time to go public too."[1558]

Gay rights, together with issues including abortion and the ERA, were firmly in their sights, and Christian Voice focussed its efforts on gathering information about election candidates, creating lists that showed which were in favour and which were not, and raising funds to assist with the election campaigns of candidates they approved of.[1559] By October of that year, Christian Voice had 200,000 members, including 37,000 pastors. It had also branched out from the main evangelical faiths to get on board with members of other Christian denominations, including conservative Catholics. Their fund-raising activities focused on fear-mongering. One letter posed the question, "How would you feel if tomorrow your child… was taught by a practising homosexual?"[1560] In addition to supporting Reagan, Christian Voice would go on to take an active part in thirty-eight congressional races, supporting conservative candidates.[1561]

The NGTF was not alone in sending Carter a questionnaire as to his position in various areas. A list of inquiries concerning social issues such as abortion, homosexuality, school prayer and ERA arrived at the White House on October 2, 1980, just a month before the election These demands came from the Rev. Pat Andrews, pastor of the Faith Baptist Church in Princeton, Texas, who asked Carter to reply with "yes" or "no" answers.[1562] On October 27, Maddox replied that Carter could not give legitimate answers in a quick yes/no

[1558] Briggs (*The New York Times*), 19 August 1980: D17. "Evangelicals Turning to Politics Fear Moral Slide Imperils Nation."
[1559] Ward and Calhoun, 2007: 215.
[1560] Williams, 2010: 166.
[1561] Cornell (The *Associated Press*), 5 November 1980, "Evangelical Leaders See Election As Strengthening Ideals."
[1562] Letter and Questionnaire of Rev. Pat Andrews to President Carter, 2 October 1980. "Moral Majority" File. JCPL.

format, but he assured the Rev. Andrews that the President was "a man of deep faith in Jesus Christ" and "profoundly concerned about the moral and spiritual welfare of the nation."[1563]

Carter vs. Reagan

Having seen how Carter's public displays of faith had helped him in 1976, Reagan also made frequent reference to religious faith.[1564] By July 16, 1980, newspaper reports said that evangelicals "had a friend in Reagan" and could quote evangelical Christians who were disappointed with Carter's stance on issues, including homosexuality, and their feeling that he had let them down by campaigning, in 1976, as a born-again Christian and then not living up to their expectations for him.[1565] Some prominent members of the religious right wing, such as Viguerie, believed that Carter had not just ignored the evangelical right, but that his administration had actively set out to harm them.[1566] Reagan, instead, said that as the Bible is against homosexuality he "guessed he was too."[1567]

At the same time, there was growing anxiety about Carter's perceived liberalism on social issues, including in his native south. Reagan tapped into this by suggesting that Carter had betrayed his southern values.[1568] One woman was quoted as saying that she was upset about Carter's liberalism and support of the ERA, and feared that without a veer to the right American children would be taken from their parents to be "raised in communes."[1569] Many right wing evangelicals remained very angry about the IRS position on private schools and

[1563] Letter from Bob Maddox to Reverend Pat Andrews, 27 October 1980. "Moral Majority" File. JCPL.
[1564] Flippen, 2011: 279.
[1565] Sawyer and Kaiser (*The Washington Post*), 19 July 1980: A15 "Evangelicals Flock to GOP Standard Feeling they have Friend in Reagan."
[1566] Watson, 1997: 21.
[1567] Humm and Santoro (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 25. "If we Gay Men and Lesbians Stand Up."
[1568] Phillips, 2006: 181.
[1569] Roberts (*The New York Times*), 25 September 1980: B14. "Carter Camp Discovering South is no Longer Solid."

activists on the religious right were largely successful at directing this anger towards Carter.[1570]

Reagan was in tune with the highly politicised evangelical right.[1571] He had shown himself willing to play the evangelical card to win the votes of these conservative members of the electorate. Reagan was soon meeting with important opinion-formers, including Falwell and televangelist Jim Bakker.[1572] In July 1980 he gave his support to the Family Protection Act, a piece of legislation proposed by the co-chairman of his campaign, Senator Paul Laxalt. Among other things, the Act proposed denying legal services aid for cases involving gay rights and proposed denying federal funding to states that did not allow prayer to take place in public buildings.[1573]

Reagan continued to follow a stridently anti-gay line, refusing to engage with gay activists at all on the basis that he was opposed to their cause on moral grounds.[1574] This response would have been a calculated one. Reagan knew very well that many of his voters were members of the evangelical right, and he knew that this was exactly the response that they would have wished him to give to a group whose behaviour and aims they found abhorrent and sinful and considered a direct threat to the American way of life. For gay rights campaigners, the dawning awareness that Reagan was likely to be elected was difficult indeed.

On October 23, 1980, just two weeks to the election, a back page ad for Reagan appeared in the *South Boston Marshall.* It urged voters, "Don't let the *Boston Globe* make up your mind. The liberal newspapers are in bed with Carter and his 'progressive' record on

[1570] Balmer, 2008: 101.
[1571] On the matter of homosexuality, tendencies were clear; while 31% of non-evangelicals believed, for instance, that homosexuals should be allowed to teach in public schools, only 15% of evangelicals shared this viewpoint (Dionne (*The New York Times*), 7 September 1980: 34. "Poll Finds Evangelicals Aren't United Voting Bloc.")
[1572] Flippen, 2011: 299.
[1573] Hornblower (*The Washington Post*), 25 July 1980: A1. "'Pro-family' push. Political Minefield."
[1574] Clendinen and Nagourney, 1999: 421.

busing, gay rights, affirmative action and prayer in the public schools." The advertisement compared the positions of Carter and Reagan on eight issues, the sixth being gay rights. Here, it said, Reagan "opposed special treatment" for gays while Carter "supports it."[1575]

While Carter was being presented to the Christian right as a friend of the homosexuals who were so regularly decried as a serious threat to the American family, Reagan was doing a fantastic job of communicating with the evangelical right in their language. At a meeting between evangelical leaders and Reagan at the Capitol Hilton hotel in Washington, Reagan was asked what, if he died the following day, he could say to God to persuade him to let him into heaven. Reagan looked at the ground and said, "I wouldn't give God any reason for letting me in. I'd just ask for mercy, because of what Jesus Christ did for me at Calvary."[1576]

This was music to the evangelicals' ears. More than aware of how evangelicals felt about homosexuals, Reagan said that if the Holy Bible was against homosexuality then he was too, while his running mate, George Bush, took a slightly less hostile line stating that while he was opposed to gay rights, he did not think that homosexuals should be harassed.[1577] Reagan also referred to homosexuality as an "abomination in the eyes of the Lord."[1578] At the same time, Carter was failing to disguise his personal dislike of Reagan, and had made a number of scathing verbal attacks that did not reflect particularly well on him.[1579]

It quickly became apparent that Reagan was the favourite to win; despite the fact that some polls showed that Carter still had more support from evangelicals.[1580] The conservative Republicans could see – along with everyone else – how disillusioned many evangelicals had become with Carter and his progressive views on women and his relatively progressive views

[1575] *South Boston Marshall*, 23 October 1980: 24. "Why Should Southie Vote for Ronald Reagan?" Folder 2, Box 91. JCPL.
[1576] Martin, 1996: 209.
[1577] Humm and Santoro (*The New York Times*), 1 November 1980: 25. "If we Gay Men and Lesbians Stand Up."
[1578] Singh, 2003: 180.
[1579] Abramson et al, 1982: 41.
[1580] Kraft (*The Washington Post*), 2 October 1980: A29. "The Evangelical Fuss."

on touchstone issues such as abortion and rights for homosexuals. Instead, Reagan was more than happy to meet with leading conservative figures such as Falwell and Schlafly, to stress his anti-abortion message,[1581] and to pander to, if not directly inflate, the anti-gay rhetoric.

With the election due in under a month, a sense of frustration pervaded the Carter campaign, which was now effectively stalled, unable to find a way of putting Reagan on the defensive. The candidates' public attitudes reflected their respective situations: Carter reaching for ever more extravagant rhetoric to attack his opponent; Reagan relaxed, shrugging off Carter's assaults as the desperate ploy of a defeated politician.[1582]

Carter Loses to Reagan

Despite the fact that a Gallup poll had predicted that the 1980 Presidential election would be close, and the shift of many minority voters from Reagan to Carter during the final days of the campaign,[1583] Reagan won decisively; an event that seemed to the religious right confirmation that they had been wise to become politically active.[1584]

On November 4, 1980, Reagan won a landslide victory, with 50.7% of the vote to Carter's 41%.[1585] 56% of evangelical Christians had voted for Reagan as opposed to 34% for Carter, and one poll revealed that 61% of those self-identifying as "born-again white Christians" voted for Reagan. White, fundamentalist voters are calculated as representing two thirds of Reagan's lead over Carter.[1586] White, married, middle-class women tended to vote for Reagan because they felt he was stronger on "family values", while single women, and ERA supporters generally, tended to vote for Carter.[1587]

[1581] Flippen, 2011: 277.
[1582] Walsh (*The Washington Post*), 8 October 1980: A1, "Carter's Campaign Stalls."
[1583] Lanoue, 1992, 176.
[1584] Bendroth, 1999: 49.
[1585] Stanley, 2010: 186.
[1586] Cornell (The *Associated Press*), 5 November 1980, "Evangelical Leaders See Election As Strengthening Ideals."
[1587] Eisenstein, 1980: 187-205.

The belief that the evangelical wing had contributed hugely to getting conservatives to vote, and to vote for Reagan was, "borne out by an ABC-News/Lou Harris survey that concluded that the Moral Majority had played a large part in getting conservatives to the polls and in helping swing the South from Carter's column to Reagan's."[1588] In fact, supporters of the Moral Majority were much more likely than non-supporters to have switched their vote from Carter to Reagan, showing that the interest group had had a dramatic effect on how votes were cast.[1589]

Reagan's election was greeted joyfully by the evangelical groups and their leaders moved quickly to seize a share of credit for the success. Falwell said, "There's no question that Moral Majority and other religious right organizations turned out multiple millions of voters."[1590] He characterised the result as "the greatest day for the cause of conservatism and American morality in my adult life."[1591] The Christian Voice claimed that it counted victories in 25 of 38 congressional races in which it had been active, and Gary Jarmin, political director of the same organization, happily announced that "we did much better than we expected."[1592] In *Time* magazine, statisticians calculated that two-thirds of Reagan's ten-point win came from evangelicals.[1593] However, the vice-president elect, George Bush, poured cold water on the evangelicals' self-congratulations, arguing that no single group was responsible for Reagan's victory. This was widely seen by Republicans as a snub to the Moral Majority.[1594]

[1588] Sutton, 2013: 22.
[1589] Wilcox, 1992:117.
[1590] Buursma (*Chicago Tribune*), 6 November 1980: 12, "Moral Majority: Crusade Has Just Begun."
[1591] Cornell (The *Associated Press*), 5 November 1980, "Evangelical Leaders See Election As Strengthening Ideals."; Sullivan (*The New York Times*), 11 November 1980: 2, Falwell Warns Jersey Liberals at Capitol Rally."
[1592] Cornell (*The Associated Press*), 6 November 1980, "Religious Right Wing Claims Campaign Successes."
[1593] Warner (*Time)*, 8 December 1980: 24, "Nation: New Resolve by the New Right."
[1594] Clymer (*The New York Times*), 18 November 1980: 10, "Bush Says no Single Group Gave Reagan his Victory."

Reagan had polled as the least popular Presidential candidate to win since Truman, but that still trumped Carter, who had polled as America's least popular President during the same period.[1595] One onlooker considered the result of the election, "a tremendous example of the volatility of public opinion, and the start of a period in which elections were candidate – rather than policy-driven.[1596] Carter ultimately lost to Reagan for many reasons, and one of them was the perception of evangelicals that he was "soft on" homosexuals and in favour of granting them rights that they did not warrant. Of course, this was only one of the reasons for the Carter defeat. Michael Dukakis told the author that "1980 saw many of the same forces in play in the Kennedy-Carter contest and Reagan's subsequent victory. On the other hand, the reasons for Carter's defeat were largely economic. The oil embargo, raging inflation and other economic factors played by far the biggest role in his defeat."[1597]

In a personal interview, Charlotte Bunch stated her view that Carter's innate "decency" played a role in his defeat, "… the politics of decency is at such a contradiction to this kind of right wing ruthlessness and I think Carter was very much a victim of that. And every time he tried to stand up for principles he was made to seem weak."[1598]

Pat Robertson used his first broadcast after the election to claim proudly that the votes of conservative Christians had been the decisive factor in bringing Reagan to victory. Robertson went on to itemise problems he had had with a number of White House staffers under Carter, and referred to Costanza as having been "repugnant to Christians" for having advocated gay rights.[1599] Over the years that followed Reagan's election, Robertson became ever more entrenched in his right wing position, culminating, in 1991, in his publication of *A New World Order*, a book dedicated to the conspiracy theory that various American

[1595] Brinkley, 1996: 507.
[1596] Wattenberg, 1991: v, 1.
[1597] Professor Michael Dukakis in a personal interview, 27 April 2014.
[1598] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014.
[1599] Flippen, 2011: 312.

Presidents, including Carter and Wilson, were "unknowingly and unwittingly carrying out a mission and mouthing the phrases of a tightly knit cabal whose goal is nothing less than a new order for the human race under the domination of Lucifer and his followers."[1600] Robertson suggested that while they were not themselves "evil", Carter and Wilson were being guided by Satan.[1601] It seems a great irony that many of the same people who helped propel Carter to the presidency in 1976 turned so rabidly against him four years later.

However, not all evangelicals were so critical of Carter or dismissive of his efforts. Looking back from 2014, Dr. Morris Sheats recalled in a personal interview, "I believe President Carter is a Christian who did his best. He served during very hard times. I believe he has accomplished much more through The Carter Center than as President. I highly respect him and believe his efforts in the Middle East will be historically significant. Was he a Christian Politician or a Political Christian? On a personal note [speaking about the White House breakfast meeting with the evangelical leaders, discussed above]... each man present was taken into the oval office for a picture with the President - a great honour. While there (about two minutes) I asked Mr Carter to teach me one thing he did daily that might not be known by the public. He shared that he wrote two people each day a "thank you" note who had helped him in some way. That "tip for living" has been a great asset in my life, I am grateful for that moment and workable idea. President Carter is an honourable man, and I believe a Christian man."[1602]

CARTER'S CONTRIBUTION TO GAY RIGHTS DURING THE 1980 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

[1600] Robertson, 1991: 3; Oldfield, 1998: 195.
[1601] Boston, 1996: 123.
[1602] Dr. Morris Sheats in a personal interview, 6 April 2014.

Carter did not seek the gay vote in the 1980 contest as vigorously as he had done in 1976, being painfully aware of the damage his sympathetic policies had done to his relationship with the evangelicals, assumed to be his closest allies. Nevertheless, the 1980 Presidential elections were important to the development of the gay community and contributed a series of significant landmarks to its fight for nationwide recognition. For example, seventy-seven openly homosexual delegates attended the 1980 Democratic Convention compared to three at the Convention in 1976. In addition, for the first time, there were openly homosexual delegates, if only two, at the Republican Convention. It was also during the 1980 Democratic Convention that a homosexual (Mel Boozer) was nominated to run for vice president by one of the two major political parties. Furthermore, an admitted homosexual (David McReynolds) set a precedent when he accepted nomination and ran for President, albeit at the behest of the tiny Socialist Party.

Although Carter was not directly involved in any of these developments, it is indisputable that they took place during his tenure. That homosexuals felt emboldened to declare their identities to the nation and to seek office at the highest levels clearly owed much to the atmosphere of tolerance and respect engendered by the Carter administration. It seems highly unlikely that such advances would have occurred if Carter had not publicly and consistently demonstrated his willingness to listen to and co-operate with legitimate gay rights causes. Michael Chanin was expressing an evident truth when he told gay activists that Carter had "begun to change the attitudes of people."[1603]

Carter had indeed done that, legitimising the gay rights movement with a series of decisions and policies. He had brought the issue of gay rights into the White House itself for the first time; he had appointed homosexual men and women to positions in his administration and in public service; he had permitted the participation of declared

[1603] Peterson (*The Washington Post*), 28 November 1979: A2, "Brown's Support for Gays Brings Cheers."

homosexuals at the NWC and then in his own WHCF; and he had facilitated official meetings between the NGTF and federal agencies. Developments such as these were key to the sight (an extraordinary one for most Americans) of scores of openly homosexual delegates turning up for the Democratic convention. David Mack Henderson told the author that Carter's legitimisation of the movement, and his positive attitude towards gay rights in general, were critical in enabling all these changes. He said, "I am sure of it. Carter changed the perception of how we were seen and therefore how we were treated. Carter removed what was seen as the stigma of being a homosexual. A lot of homosexuals I knew came out during Carter's time. They were not embarrassed to admit they were homosexual anymore. This, for me, was his (Carter's) major achievement: getting rid of the stigma of being a homosexual."[1604]

No less significant to the 1980 election story was that the Democratic convention ratified a gay rights plank for the first time. It is a fact that Carter opposed it and insisted on excluding the words gay and lesbian, aware of the negative reaction this would bring from his evangelical supporters. However, he could have avoided such a reaction altogether by vetoing the plank, and the temptation to do so must have been strong. Nevertheless, he decided to accept gay activists' appeals and allow what became the first ever gay rights plank.

Ginny Apuzzo, who co-authored the plank, was a prominent lesbian activist and executive director of the NGTF. When Carter appointed her to his platform committee, she became the first openly homosexual person ever named to the committee of one of the two major parties. Her appointment further demonstrated Carter's opposition to sexual discrimination, while offering recognition and visibility to the gay community. At one stroke, the highest authority in the nation signalled that homosexuals were to be treated as equal members of society and legitimate players on the political scene.

[1604] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.

CONCLUSION

The 1980 Presidential election was very different for Carter from 1976, not only because of the result. The major change was the shift of the bulk of the evangelical vote from Carter to Reagan. As for the gay vote, Carter did not cultivate it as assiduously as he had in 1976, but he was still backed by most gay organisations and individuals because of his contributions to gay causes over the preceding four years. That said, there were gay supporters who voted for him only because they saw him as the better of two bad choices.

The single most notable aspect of the 1980 elections was the mobilization of the evangelical right. Although evangelicals had got together to support Carter in 1976, the extent of the 1980 exercise was beyond comparison, and to date has never been equalled. What contributed especially to the 1980 drive was the formation far ahead of the elections of several evangelical organizations sharing the same ethos and ambitions.

The role of the evangelical right in the 1980 elections has been widely discussed and the consensus is that it was instrumental in Reagan's victory. Professor Randall Balmer told the author: "I think the religious right had a profound influence on American elections beginning in 1980 and for nearly three decades thereafter. In terms of policy, however, the religious right has had relatively little influence, except for the appointment of hard-right conservatives to the judiciary."[1605]

Where the 1980 election were of major importance was in the matter of gay rights. Carter sent an emissary to a fundraising event for gay convention delegates and he contacted the NGTF directly, asking or its support. That the NGTF agreed to back him was in itself a recognition of his contribution to gay rights. Several landmarks for gay rights took place during the 1980 Presidential election. They included:

[1605] Professor Randall Balmer in a personal interview, 18 June 2014.

- Seventy-seven openly homosexual delegates participated in the Democratic Convention, compared to only three in 1976.
- Mel Boozer became the first acknowledged homosexual to be nominated as Vice President by the Democratic Party.
- David McReynolds was the first open homosexual to run for President
- Two openly homosexual delegates participated for the first time at a Republic convention in 1980.
- For the first time, a gay rights plank was included in the Democratic Convention.
- Ginny Apuzzo was the first ever homosexual person appointed to the Democratic Party's platform committee, and she was appointed by Carter himself.

These developments in 1980 were the fruit of four years of Carter's sympathetic policies towards the gay rights movement. His policies and decisions over that period changed the public discourse about gay rights. No longer was homosexuality seen by most Americans as something sinful or negative; now men and women who professed to be gay began to be accepted as part of society. Carter's appointments of homosexuals in public service, the White House meetings and his gay rights policies all helped to make it easier for people to acknowledge their homosexuality and for heterosexuals to accept them as equal members of society.

Ultimately, the division of America into two very different cultural camps (a situation that largely prevails even today) made Reagan's victory a relatively easy one to secure. While it would be an error to claim that the battle between pro- and anti-gay rights activists was the major social issue of the election – abortion, for example, was a decisive factor, among others[1606] – the perception that Carter was "soft on gays and perverts" made many on the evangelical right feel that they simply could not work with him.

[1606] Balmer, 2008, 105; Diamond, 1998: 133.

CHAPTER NINE

CARTER'S CONTRIBUTION TO GAY RIGHTS IN HISTORICAL RESPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

In order fully to understand Carter's contribution towards gay rights, it is important to consider the evolution of the struggle after Reagan's 1980 victory, and to take into consideration the environment and climate of the time. Therefore, this chapter will examine developments in gay rights from 1981 to 2017, set against the events of Carter's time. I am not trying to give a survey of subsequent history for its own sake, but to establish a historical benchmark against which to judge the Carter presidency. This chapter also examines the opinions of several prominent gay rights activists who were active in the 1970s regarding Carter's overall contribution to their struggle.

THE REAGAN BACKLASH

With Reagan's accession, open access by the gay community to the administration came to an abrupt end. A December 1981 letter from the NGTF leadership to its members gave a clear picture of the situation which gay rights activists would face throughout the 1980s. It said, "We have been shunned by the White House… our contacts at the numerous agencies of the federal government have been cut off or severely restricted."[1607] It was the religious right which now enjoyed this access.

Reagan had been an unexpected opponent of the Briggs Initiative on libertarian grounds, but he was no friend to the gay rights movement, having already cast his lot with the

[1607] NGTF Board of Directors announcement. December 1981. Letter over the signatures of Bill Beauchamp and Barbara Weinstock, co-chairs. NGTF records, Box 3, Folder 11, CU.

most conservative elements of the Christian right wing. At least in the very early years of Reagan's presidency, the religious right, "gained unprecedented access to the inner circles of power" and was apparently part of the "power elite."[1608] When Senator Roger Jepson introduced the Family Protection Act in 1981, which would prevent homosexuals from receiving Social Security, and veteran or welfare benefits, Reagan endorsed this legislation. That same year, fundamental Christians hailed as another victory the passage of a law prohibiting the Legal Services Corporation from accepting discrimination cases from homosexuals.[1609]

In 1981, under the Reagan administration, the House of Representatives passed the McDonald Amendment, which eliminated free legal services to gay people on low incomes. Also in 1981, at a time when the House of Representatives had a Democratic majority, while the Republicans had gained control of the Senate (the first time that Republicans gained control of any chamber of Congress since 1953[1610]), Congress blocked repeal of the District of Columbia's sodomy law."[1611]

For gay rights activists, the 1980s were a difficult time, mostly because of the AIDS epidemic, during which public attitudes towards homosexuality became more aggressive, apparently undoing a lot of the gains made in the second half of the 1970s.[1612] Many prominent figures on the religious right, such as Falwell, declared the AIDS epidemic a sign of God's anger with homosexuals and their supporters.[1613] Pat Buchanan said in 1983: "The poor homosexuals, they have declared war on Nature and now Nature is exacting an awful retribution."[1614]

[1608] Hoffrenning, 1995: 101.
[1609] Rimmerman, 2002: 132.
[1610] Martis, 1989.
[1611] Bernstein, 2002: 556.
[1612] Wood and Bartkowsi, 2004: 60.
[1613] Flippen, 2011: 336.
[1614] Deitcher, 1995: 142.

Other prominent religious right wing activists proposed that homosexuals should be quarantined, and even hinted that it would be even better if they were executed or at least castrated.[1615] Reagan, who had depended heavily on votes from the Christian right wing to secure election in 1980 and re-election in 1984, displayed little interest in the AIDS epidemic, and launched no federal programmes to investigate the disease, about which little was known in the early 1980s. As a result of the AIDS catastrophe, gay rights organisations were distracted throughout the 1980s and 1990s from their quest for greater civil rights, focusing instead on the urgent need for research into the disease, and on the need for the sick to receive the care they needed.[1616]

BILL CLINTON AND GEORGE W. BUSH

Although gay rights had retreated somewhat as an important issue for Presidential candidates during the 1980s, by the early 1990s, they were back on the agenda.[1617] The election of Clinton in 1992 appeared to offer the chance to extend gay rights and in fact Clinton had promised to end formal discrimination against gays.[1618] Since 1992, the Democratic Party had actively sought the votes of gays and lesbians.[1619] In a very real sense, in this Clinton was following in Carter's footsteps, even if he did not explicitly say so.

Despite the fact that Clinton had promised to extend greater rights to homosexuals, and despite his clever use of family values in a campaign that made it clear that family values could be inclusive and liberal,[1620] Clinton disappointed gays in that regard. This was particularly so in his support of the "Defence of Marriage Act" (DOMA), which allowed

[1615] Diamond, 1989: 102.
[1616] Fetner, 2008: 51.
[1617] Rhodebeck, 2015: 6.
[1618] McClain, 2013: 1624.
[1619] Ward and Calhoun-Brown, 2007: 241.
[1620] McClain, 2013: 1627.

states not to recognise same-sex unions legitimized in other states.[1621] After the passage of the Act, in 1996, nearly forty US states went on to pass their own DOMA, effectively prohibiting same-sex marriage at state level, although a much smaller number of states did facilitate civil partnerships, and even same-sex marriage, during the same time frame. Clinton also fudged the issue of homosexuals serving in the US military with his "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT) ruling, which prohibited asking candidates or military employees about their sexuality, while retaining the possibility of firing them if they did not remain discreetly in the closet.[1622]

By the early 2000s, positive movement towards greater rights for gay citizens had occurred. In May 2003, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled that the constitution of the state guaranteed marriage rights for same-sex couples. In June 2003, the *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling saw anti-sodomy laws invalidated in all those states that still had them on the books, following a lengthy legal struggle after the arrest of two men for engaging in intercourse;[1623] in 2005 the Supreme Court of California accepted a new law that put in place a domestic partners' registry for homosexual couples and later the same year officially recognised the co-parenting rights of gay couples. Also in 2005, the Supreme Court of Alaska ruled that both state and local governments must offer the same benefits to the partners of homosexual employees as to spouses in heterosexual marriages.[1624]

While religious right and anti-gay activists continue to bemoan what they see as the increasing liberalisation of the United States, it would be a big mistake to suppose that they have lost their power as a political force; in fact, they have tended to be increasingly political with the passage of time.[1625] On November 4, 2008, even as America's first mixed-race

[1621] McClain, 2013: 1624.
[1622] Carbado, 2000: 1468.
[1623] http://www.lambdalegal.org/in-court/cases/lawrence-v-texas
[1624] Ward and Calhoun-Brown, 2007: 245.
[1625] Green et al, 1997: 85.

president took office, in California Proposition 8, an amendment to the state constitution that banned same-sex marriage was passed despite the huge effort that had been expended by gay rights activists (although it was eventually declared unconstitutional). Consistently, the evangelical right has shown itself to be an astute political force that is very good at motivating voters by channelling and activating anti-gay sentiments prevalent among the general population. While the gay rights movement has made significant gains in the areas of law and legislation, it has generally been less effective than its rivals at whipping up grassroots sentiment;[1626] something that it has done without substantially changing the approach that was honed under Carter's presidency.

While the issue of gay rights remains highly politicised and activists have won considerable ground, the evangelical right is still a force to be reckoned with, with well-developed resources and networks and a sophisticated understanding of the political machine and the plethora of media available to campaigners today. Writing in 2007, in the final years of the presidency of George W. Bush, Wald and Calhoun-Brown stated that, "… homosexuals… face expulsion from the military, an inability to marry, the denial of partner health, tax and insurance benefits, increased scrutiny or outright bans on adoption, ambiguous parent rights for both non-biological and biological parents, and many other forms of differential treatment based on their sexual orientation."[1627]

BARACK OBAMA AND GAY RIGHTS

Obama ran for election in 2008 telling America that, while he supported gay rights in general, he did not support gay marriage, and felt that civil unions represented the best way forward for homosexual couples. His position on gay rights, and the steady evolution of the US

[1626] Stone, 2012: xv.
[1627] Ward and Calhoun-Brown, 2007: 329.

towards a more gay-friendly position on issues including marriage, have not developed in a vacuum, but in the context of the growing sense of gay rights as an important issue, starting before the Carter Presidency, gaining impetus under Carter, and following a rocky and often uncertain path towards the current status quo, with future gains in this area appearing to be a certainty.

In 2008, Obama presented the most ambitious and aggressive gay rights platform ever, in the context of an appeal to Americans generally to subscribe to values and ideals held by all Americans.[1628] Obama also appealed directly to gay voters in a document called Obama Pride, in which he vowed to work hard to put into place the Matthew Shepard Act to outlaw all hate crimes, and also to pass an inclusive employment non-discrimination act that would make any discrimination against gay employees illegal. This was greeted warmly by gay rights activists, including those who had backed Hillary Clinton prior to her withdrawal from the race, many of whom now pledged to give Obama's campaign their full support. In fact, the director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, David Noble, left that position to join Obama's campaign as the gay vote director.

In 2009, the Matthew Shepard Act was passed, adding the words "sexual orientation" and "gender identity or expression" to laws against hate crimes. Shepard, a student at the University of Wyoming, was murdered in 1998 apparently because he was a homosexual. The intense public outrage at his brutal murder prompted many to demand that the government make these changes. However, despite various efforts (legislation passed in the Senate in 2007, but President George W. Bush indicated that he would veto it if it reached his desk, and the Democratic leadership dropped it), the Act did not pass until 2009, more than ten years after Shepard's death, and in the first year of Obama's new presidency.[1629]

[1628] McClain, 2014: 1676-7.
[1629] Dunn, 2010.

In 2010, Obama's administration extended Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) rights to same-sex and other parents who do not necessarily have a biological link with their children.[1630] The same year, Obama requested legislation that ensured that Medicaid and Medicare hospitals would respect the rights of patients to decide who should visit them; previously, in states that did not have gay marriage, same-sex spouses could be, and often were, prevented from seeing their partners in hospital, as there was no recognition of their marriage in the state in which the hospital was located. His request was met with a degree of resistance from many hospitals, and the legislation would have applied only to Medicaid/Medicare hospitals, and not all hospitals (although most were included).

In December 2010, the DADT legislation was finally repealed,[1631] and the changes went into effect on September 20, 2011. This was hailed as a victory by gay rights activists, the Democratic Party, and by Obama himself, as removing the last remaining obstacle between homosexual Americans and parity of rights in the area of employment. DOMA law had been interpreted under George W. Bush as negating the need to even count how many American same-sex couples had been married in states or foreign countries permitting gay marriage. By 2010, the Obama administration had reversed that decision and announced that the US census would record and tabulate the number of gay marriages that had been carried out. In February 2011, the President and Attorney General announced that the Department of Justice would no longer defend Section 3 of DOMA against equal protection constitutional challenges brought by same-sex couples married under state law, although the administration would continue to "enforce" it.[1632]

In July 2011, the White House announced the President's support of the Respect for Marriage Act, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressman Jerrold Nadler,

[1630] McClain, 2014: 1677.
[1631] Hagedorn, 2012: 795.
[1632] https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/570/12-307/. Retrieved July 10, 2015.

which would repeal DOMA on the grounds that it was unconstitutional and uphold the principle that gay and lesbian couples should receive the same Federal rights and legal protections as straight couples. Leaders in the Republican Party were not pleased by this change, and pledged to launch a legal challenge to it. By this stage, Obama had started to make much stronger statements in favour of gay rights than before, presumably because it was becoming apparent that public support for such measures had increased, and he declared: "Every single American – gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgender – every single American deserves to be treated equally in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of our society. It's a pretty simple proposition."[1633]

Moreover, when Obama won the presidency for the second time in 2012, he became the first sitting President to endorse same-sex marriage, and even mentioned homosexuals in his acceptance speech; something that would have been unthinkable during Carter's time, and might be even today were it not for the considerable strides that were taken in the area of gay rights during Carter's presidency. Obama's support of gay marriage came with a caveat; he felt that it should be dealt with on a state-by-state basis, rather than at federal level.[1634]

In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down DOMA; since then all the federal circuit courts have ruled in favour of same-sex marriage. From 2014, it was no longer legal for insurance companies to treat gay people and their families differently, including with respect to health insurance. This means that health benefits are now guaranteed to be extended to domestic partners or same-sex spouses. Also, measures to prevent and prosecute domestic violence were extended more completely to same-sex couples.[1635]

On June 16, 2014, Jon Carson, Executive Director of Organizing for Action, wrote to the White House to ask about current policy and action on the issue of gay rights, and

[1633] Obama, 1 October 2011.
[1634] Prakash, 2012: 554-5.
[1635] Personal email correspondence with Jon Carson, Executive Director of Organizing for Action, 17 June 2014.

received the following email the next day in response: "President Obama just took a huge step forward in the fight for LGBT equality. Yesterday, he proposed an executive action that would prohibit companies that receive federal contracts from discriminating based on sexual orientation or gender identity. That's because it's unthinkable that – in 2014 – someone could be fired for who they are or whom they love… In just a few years, we've repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the Defence of Marriage Act has been struck down, and nearly half of all Americans live in states where same-sex couples can now get married. That's progress, and it's happening whether the opposition likes it or not. We're winning, because there are millions of people like you who are out there fighting for it… In 2014, discrimination against LGBT Americans shouldn't be legal anywhere – President Obama and a bipartisan majority in the U.S. Senate have stood up and said that."[1636]

On 26 June, 2015, the US Supreme Court ruled that the US Constitution guarantees same sex couples the right to marry, a massive landmark in the battle for gay rights. Gay rights activists have applauded the changes that came at an accelerated rate under Obama's presidency. In a personal interview, Professor Bunch stated her view that Obama had learned from "the mistakes of Carter" and that he is "much more modern," and "much better." She also feels very positive about Obama's performance in the area of gay rights, "While Obama has been disappointing in some areas relating to human rights… nobody could suggest that he has not pushed out the boat for gay rights. Even though public opinion about homosexuality has changed dramatically in the years since Carter, Obama has shown himself prepared to take risks to support the human rights and journey towards equality of this element of the American public. There genuinely has been a sea change in the area of equality for gay Americans, and this is a legacy of which Obama can feel justifiably proud."[1637]

[1636] Personal email correspondence with Jon Carson, Executive Director of Organizing for Action, 17 June 2014.
[1637] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014.

Eric Marcus[1638] described to the author Obama's role in developing gay rights as "dramatic" and "transformative," and compared him favourably to Clinton, who is often remembered as a friend of gay rights although he also signed two very retrogressive pieces of legislation, DOMA and DADT.

At the same time, the religious right wing continues to exert huge pressure on American political life, and the Republican and Democratic parties have tended to take increasingly polarised stances around social issues.[1639] The evangelical right continues, in the main, to take a strong negative stance on gay rights, and to see homosexuality as unnatural, sinful and damaging not just to the individuals in question, but to society as a whole. One item of propaganda, distributed in schools by a conservative right wing organisation, claimed that the ultimate aim of the gay rights movement is to abolish a legal age of consent and consider paedophiles as prophets in a new sexual order.[1640] Dobson, still a prominent right wing evangelical and anti-gay rights campaigner, has compared those who support gay marriage to "the Nazis."[1641]

Until the end of his presidency Obama remained a strong advocate of gay marriage, and his administration became incrementally more supportive of the extension of full equality for gay Americans, against a backdrop of rapid cultural change in this area, and the steady growth of support even in elements of the government that are typically socially conservative. However, gay rights activists in the US, and elsewhere, continue to fight against a range of problems, including stigma, victimisation and care programmes that are not suited to their needs. Although the US has improved hugely in the area of gay rights, it is not the most progressive country by a long way and young people in particular sometimes experience inadequacies in social care, education, and other elements of state infrastructure, such as

[1638] Eric Marcus in a personal interview, 18 February 2015.
[1639] Wilson, 2007: 86.
[1640] Wilcox and Larson, 2007: 147.
[1641] Hedges, 2007: 203.

school,[1642] programmes for the homeless[1643] and more in ways that are contrary to the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child,[1644] which remains unratified.[1645] Gay Americans still often experience abuse of various kinds,[1646] while transsexuals, particularly the young, can experience being denied hormone treatments.[1647]

In an interview, Professor John d'Emilio commented about gay rights today: "Although some victories, like passage of a national non-discrimination law, proved elusive because of the power of Republicans in Congress, much change has occurred – from the end of the military exclusion policy to the refusal of the Justice Department to support the Defence of Marriage Act to Obama's executive order prohibiting discrimination against transgender federal employees. And, all of these changes at the national level have helped keep LGBT issues in the public eye in a way that has steadily moved public opinion in the direction of supporting formal legal equality."[1648]

COMPARISONS

That it took almost thirty years after Carter left office for homosexuals to make any significant gains testifies to the difficulties the President had faced. The long hiatus of the Reagan years shows that Carter was far ahead of his time. It also proved that the changes under Carter did not happen simply as a result of current changes in society, but were solely due to Carter's initiatives and his willingness to improve the lives of gay American men and women. Ford, Carter's predecessor as President, and Reagan, after him, both lived in the same environment as Carter and experienced the same social conditions, but no significant

[1642] Kosciw et al, 2012.
[1643] Ray, 2006.
[1644] UN, 1989.
[1645] Winter et al, 2015: 114.
[1646] Woronoff et al, 2006.
[1647] Majd et al, 2009.
[1648] Professor John d'Emilio in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.

change took place during their terms. That is hardly surprising given their attitudes towards gays.

Reagan's election was a serious obstacle to the pursuit of gay rights. By severing communication with the NGTF and closing the doors of the White House and the federal agencies, Reagan effectively returned homosexuals in the USA to where they were before Carter became president. It would be another twelve years, with the election of Clinton, before the administration doors were open again to gay rights activists. A serious blow for the gay community, coinciding with Reagan's election, was the emergence in 1981 of the AIDS epidemic, for which homosexual men were widely blamed and the community stigmatised. Reagan, supported by the evangelical right, remained mostly indifferent, offering nothing significant in the way of medical assistance or research programmes or any moderation of public discourse. We can only speculate as to how Carter would have reacted to this situation, but we can assume that he would at least have kept an open door for gay activists, as he had promised during his 1980 Presidential campaign.

A great many gay rights activists were dismayed by Carter's defeat, and in retrospect most of them are now certain that a second term for Carter would have been far better than the Reagan presidency for the gay community. Ginny Apuzzo told the author, "the evolution of President Carter's consciousness was slow but deep and I believe sincere. I never doubted that had President Carter prevailed in the 1980 election, the course of the AIDS epidemic would have been significantly different."[1649]

Nancy Higgins told the author, "I can't be sure what would have happened if Ford had won, but I very much doubt that he would have been as open and willing as Carter. He certainly was not friendly towards gays in the time he was President, so why would he have changed afterwards? And then we all felt what Reagan was about. Reagan not only stopped

[1649] Ginny Apuzzo in a personal interview, 22 June 2017.

the progress that Carter had started, but he took us one step further back to where we were before Carter."[1650] Jeffrey Montgomery stated in a personal interview, "Certainly Carter's efforts and attitude legitimised our struggle and our movement, and changed public discourse about our rights. I strongly believe that things for homosexuals would have advanced further had he (Carter) beaten Reagan. He was certainly more humane and I believe he would have reacted very differently to the AIDS epidemic."[1651]

Eddie Sandifer told the author, "Talking to Reagan was like talking to the door. He did not want to hear and he did not want to know; he wanted nothing to do with homosexuals. I am sure Carter would not have been like this. I can't tell what else he would have done, but I am positive that he would been a million times better for gay rights than Reagan was."[1652] David Mack Henderson characterised Reagan's election to the author as a "major backlash" for gay rights. "We were back again in the Stone Age. It was not just Reagan, everything went wrong in the eighties. It was really a tragedy. Would things had been better for gay rights if Carter had defeated Reagan? That is unquestionable."[1653]

Professor Charlotte Bunch said in a personal interview: "If Carter had been re-elected would he have done more for gay rights? … yes, I think Carter would have done much more in a second term, but he didn't get a second term."[1654] Louie Crewe and Donald Hallman also told the author they believed the gay rights suggestions would have been better if Carter had been re-elected.[1655]

Real progress for their cause did not arrive until Obama's election in 2008. However, even then, it was possible for people to be fired because of their sexuality. As we have seen,

[1650] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 17 June 2016.
[1651] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview 25 February 2016.
[1652] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.
[1653] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016.
[1654] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview 17 June 2014.
[1655] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014; Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.

Carter protected homosexuals in 95% of federal employment, basically everywhere but the security services and the military. That 5% remained outstanding and Carter declined to issue an executive order to cover this sector was a matter of much dissatisfaction among gay activists throughout his presidency. Significantly, the situation would remain exactly as Carter left it for the next almost thirty years. It was the same for military service. That Carter upgraded several dishonourable discharges of homosexuals to honourable was the best thing that any president did for gay soldiers until Obama permanently removed sexual discrimination from the military.

Without downgrading Obama's achievements, it was easier for him to support gay rights than it was for Carter during the second part of the 1970s. By 2008, the public attitude towards homosexuals had changed markedly. However, this change started with Carter's presidency and was the result of his policies and decisions. The meaningful steps that occurred during the Carter presidency contributed substantially to the changes that we have seen over the decades up to the present. If some of Carter's achievements appear unimportant today, when same-sex marriages are legal, it is important to remember that he acted at a time when homosexuality was considered by many Americans to be a disease which could be cured by treatment. In a personal interview, Eddie Sandifer said that if someone had told him in the 1970s that there would be a time in the USA when gay men would be allowed to marry each other and even adopt children, he "would have thought that this man is insane. Right away. No further discussion."[1656] In judging Carter's achievements in this field, it is essential to set his actions against the environment and attitudes of his time, not the way things are today.

[1656] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.

GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS' OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

Although Carter's role in advancing gay rights has been underestimated and little publicized, it has not gone entirely unrecognised. Gay rights activists who were active in the 1970s do recognise Carter's role in advancing their cause and this is very important as they are the ones who experienced Carter's efforts. Costanza said that Carter's administration had "done more to insure gay rights and the elimination of harassment and discrimination against gay people than any administration in American history."[1657] Elaine Noble, quoted above, pointed out that the gay rights movement at the time was surprised that Carter's administration opened as many doors as it did.

Louie Crew reflected in 2014 in a personal interview that "… I think Mr Carter himself would probably… reflect that no, he wasn't as bold as he might have been, but I think that's more from the point of view of what came later. He certainly has been a major advocate for example in his retirement for marriage equality. I thought he had done a marvellous thing in Georgia and I thought and I still think that he was one of the brightest Presidents we ever had… I think the reforms were highly significant. They set a model for the country and I think they opened the country's experience." Crew believes that Carter legitimised the gay rights movement and changed public discourse about gay rights. He also stated that as President, Carter "humanised" gay activists.[1658]

Professor Charlotte Bunch said in a personal interview "Movement realignments were starting to happen and I think Carter… because of his commitment to human rights he probably did better than some of them might have."[1659] Tom Hayden told the author that, "…

[1657] Letter from Midge Costanza to James Woodward, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1658] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.
[1659] Professor Charlotte Bunch in a personal interview, 17 June 2014.

generally, Carter's administration created an era in which the movement for LGBT rights began to impact the political and policy processes. It took three or four decades before the seeds really began to grow in the present. It is important to recall the hard times."[1660]

Professor Doreen Mattingly told the author that Carter "certainly contributed to changing policy, and also the way that they were emboldened through contact with his administration helped to bring gay rights into the Democratic Party, and into the platform, and to the realm of what the Democratic Party stands for."[1661] Jeffrey Montgomery stated in a personal interview that, "there can be no doubt that all these efforts by President Carter were of the utmost importance for us and that really made a difference to the improvement of our lives."[1662]

David Mack Henderson told the author that Carter's reforms and efforts "unquestionably positively affected a lot of homosexuals. By looking back now after so many years, it seems incredible that Carter did all this. I don't think anyone who was not gay and lived at the time in the USA is in a position to understand and appreciate how important all these reforms were. Most homosexuals at the time were at the fringes of society, life was very difficult for many of us, and Carter tried and I would say he succeeded, at least to some extent, to not just bring hope, but make a real change to our lives… he really helped to drag gay people out of the pariah class and into the mainstream."[1663]

David McReynolds told the author that he considered Carter to be "the best ex-President" in terms of contributing to gay rights.[1664] Eddie Sandifer, in his personal interview, said also that, "I have personally always credited Carter for a lot of things that have been happening now. It was him who started the ball rolling and I strongly believe that things for

[1660] Tom Hayden in a personal interview, 4 March 2014.
[1661] Professor Doreen Mattingly in a personal interview, 3 March 2017.
[1662] Jeffrey Montgomery in a personal interview 25 February 2016.
[1663] David Mack Henderson in a personal interview, 26 July 2016
[1664] David McReynolds in a personal interview, 6 November 2014.

homosexuals would have advanced further had he beaten Reagan."[1665] Nancy Higgins told the author, "I have always said that Carter was the best President for gay rights after Obama. What he did was enormous, especially considering the frame of time. It is a shame he did not get the recognition he deserved, but I think we are partly to blame. It is often in human nature when someone gives you something to keep on asking for more and more and then when once he tells you no, you forget all the previous good things he did for you. This is what we did at the time with Carter…"[1666]

Richard Socarides told the author regarding Carter's achievement with regards to gay rights, "I think it's clear that there were a number of actions taken at a staff level which helped set the stage for progress later."[1667] Donald Hallman told the author that "Carter's contribution in advancing gay rights is for me unquestionable and I am actually surprised that it is not very hyped. He was the one who set the wheels in motion in the 1970s in a very difficult period for us. I think he was a very brave president who did the right thing and what his conscience told him to do, but as it often happens it was not appreciated at the time. For me, after Obama, Carter is by far the most gay-friendly President we had."[1668]

CARTER'S VIEWS ON GAY RIGHTS AFTER HIS TERM AS PRESIDENT

As for Carter, after leaving the Presidency, he continued to be deeply involved in matters concerning human rights, among them rights for homosexuals, as indicated by his public support for civil unions for homosexuals.[1669] In fact, Carter appears to have felt released from the many constraints that were placed on him by the office of president and to have grown progressively more open-minded about "lifestyles" that once made him uncomfortable. In his

[1665] Eddie Sandifer in a personal interview, 26 February 2016.
[1666] Nancy Higgins in a personal interview, 17 June 2016.
[1667] Richard Socarides in a personal interview, 27 May 2015.
[1668] Donald Hallman in a personal interview, 19 August 2015.
[1669] Collins, 2012: 97.

memoir *Living Faith*, published in 2001, Carter points out that the Jesus portrayed in the Bible never so much as mentions homosexuality, and adds: "It is much easier and more convenient for heterosexual Christians to attack homosexuals, based primarily on selected verses in the Old Testament."[1670]

CONCLUSION

Carter's defeat led to a severe backlash against gay rights. Reagan's refusal to meet with gay rights activists, the no-longer-open doors of federal agencies, and the AIDS epidemic, were all major setbacks for the gay community. Within a few years all the progress that had been made under Carter had gone down the drain, and the situation for homosexual Americans was even worse than it had been before 1976. The fact that it took another thirty years of continual struggle for gay rights activists to achieve any significant gains clearly shows the monumental difficulties Carter had to face. Therefore, by looking at Carter's policies and decisions from a historical perspective, we can now clearly see how important and ahead of their time they were. This is confirmed by the views of prominent gay rights campaigners who were active in the 1970s.

[1670] Collins, 2012: 197.

CONCLUSION

WHAT EXACTLY IS CARTER'S LEGACY IN THE AREA OF GAY RIGHTS?

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has examined Carter's role in advancing gay rights during his presidency, as well as his relationship with gay rights activists. In addition, it also explored his attitude to activists on the evangelical right and their attempts to influence his policies. Perhaps because of his decision not to highlight the issue of gay rights as such but to subsume it into the more general area of human rights, Carter's low-key but important, contribution to gay rights has been little researched, and he has not received the credit he deserves for his efforts in this area. The thesis argued that Carter contributed much more than has been acknowledged to the development and advance of gay rights in the United States. The thesis highlighted Carter's contributions in three specific areas, arguing that he contributed to gay rights through his policies; that he legitimised the gay rights movement and offered it unprecedented visibility; and that he enabled the gay community to become more aware of its capacity as a social movement and of its ability to create legal and political change by becoming organised as such.

CARTER'S CONTRIBUTION TO GAY RIGHTS THROUGH HIS POLICIES

Despite the difficult cultural environment during his term as President, Carter made significant contributions to gay rights which, though not widely recognised, were hugely important in the march towards dignity and acceptance for homosexual Americans. Carter had very little leeway to introduce new laws with respect to gay rights. However, where and when he had scope to interpret the existing laws in a more liberal way, he did so – for

example, in the subtle but far-reaching changes to the Immigration Act. In addition, whenever possible he used the White House's influence and power to enable significant positive changes and the record shows that Carter's term in office saw considerable practical gains for homosexuals.

Employment: Carter's Civil Service reform meant that homosexual workers were protected in 95% of the federal sector. While gay rights activists continued to work to remove all discrimination against gays, including in the military and the security services, this was a very significant improvement. It meant that American citizens hired to work in federal positions no longer had to hide their sexuality.

Gay rights activists wanted Carter to go a step further and issue an executive order to protect gay employees in the remaining 5% of the sector. Carter declined and the fact that the situation remained exactly the same thirty years later shows how difficult it would have been for him to accept the activists' demand. We should also remember that Carter had made his position clear before his election in 1976 when he stated that while he was against sexual discrimination, he believed that homosexuals should not be appointed in state security sectors because they were vulnerable to blackmail.

Carter also created a Task Force on Sex Discrimination and ordered its members "to take the personal responsibility to examine their own attitudes, policies, and directives" with regard to homosexual employees. Through his efforts, the Civil Service Commission began hearing harassment cases against gays, while homosexuals were no longer barred from working with the Peace Corps or the Agency for International Development. The Commission on Civil Rights also for the first time began investigating allegations of harassment against homosexuals.

Immigration Reform: Whereas, prior to Carter, even the suspicion that someone might be homosexual was grounds for the immigration authorities to bar a person from

entering the United States, now the authorities were forbidden to ask about an applicant's sexuality or to draw inferences from factors such as mannerisms or dress. The change to the law permitted entry not just to the "Marielitos" from Cuba, but also to all gay travellers and immigrants, including those travelling for reasons associated with activism. Carter was not able to change the law regarding homosexual immigrants, but he ordered removal of the sexuality question from the questionnaire which people were required to complete upon seeking entry to the USA. This small change meant that gays were now allowed to enter the country.

Military Reform: In the 1970s, anyone in the military who was revealed as being a homosexual was subjected to a dishonourable discharge. As well as reinforcing the idea that homosexuality itself was aberrant, immoral and shameful, there were serious repercussions for gay veterans in terms of access to pensions and other rights. Carter's Review Programme for Dishonourable Discharges looked at thousands of cases of gay veterans who were dishonourably discharged and changed their discharges to honourable. This entitled them to the same pension rights and other benefits as anyone else. Despite persistent pressure from gay rights activists, Carter did not end discrimination against gays in the military. However, the fact that this did not end for some thirty more years demonstrates that it was an almost impossible task for him.

Prison Reform: Before Carter's Presidency, gay prisoners were routinely subjected to degrading treatment, and were denied access to gay-interest literature, including material of a non-erotic nature, and to the services of a chaplain who accepted them and did not consider them to be immoral or sinful. In addition, sexual crimes were often reported as "homosexual rape" – giving the impression that the assailant was homosexual whereas the assailants were mostly identified as heterosexuals. As a result of the White House's intervention, the rights of homosexual prisoners were significantly enhanced, and it was made

very clear to the prison authorities that they were obliged to treat gay prisoners no differently than any others. Gay prisoners won the right to access non-pornographic material of homosexual interest and to meet with chaplains, while the word "homosexual" was removed when reporting a sexual crime.

Tax Reform: Under Carter, gay rights organisations now qualified for tax deductible and tax exempt status, just like churches or any other charitable organisation. The additional funds were a substantial resource enabling them to mobilise more effectively and reach out to a larger number of activists. In a wider way, it offered the gay rights movement recognition and legitimisation and played a role in changing public discourse regarding concerns about their rights (this issue will be discussed further below). The changed financial status of the gay rights organisations, as well as their enhanced status in American society, constituted a significant resource that they were able to bring to the fray. However, this reform angered the evangelical right, especially since the new financial status of gay rights organisations coincided with the removal of tax-exempt status from denominational schools which had failed to integrate. The outrage felt by evangelicals spurred them to mobilise further in their struggle against the gay rights movement.

Social and Legislative Reform: Under Carter, various legislative changes contributed in a range of ways to improving the situation for gay right in America, including the removal of archaic anti-gay laws and references in official literature (for example, a reference to homosexual arsonists in the Fire Department manual, which was removed by the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration), and the growing visibility of gays in public life, as well as in the media. For Americans, hetero- and homosexual alike, seeing gays represented in the media, and not just as criminals or figures of fun, meant that they could start to understand them as a part of American society.

All of the above changes, made while the United States was engaged in a cultural war involving society's self-perception, significantly improved the lives of many homosexuals. Some gay rights activists believed Carter could have gone even further, but the fact that homosexuals did not make any practical gains for another thirty years underlines the importance and bravery of Carter's decisions and the unrealistic nature of those expectations.

LEGITIMISING AND GIVING VISIBILITY TO THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

One of the main issues for gay rights activists during the 1970s concerned the visibility and what they saw as the legitimacy of their movement. At the time, they enjoyed neither. Gay Americans and their activities were ignored by the government and by federal agencies, while coverage by mainstream media was mostly negative. The only way homosexual activists could make their views known was through gay publications, of which the general public was largely ignorant.

In offering legitimacy and visibility to the gay community and its concerns, Carter made probably his biggest contribution to gay rights. This was a time when homosexuals were seen as "abnormal" by a large number of Americans, leading to their marginalisation by mainstream society. Carter was the first American president to recognise the need of homosexual people to be treated as legitimate, visible and equal. Louie Crew told this study that before Carter, the only official body to show any interest in homosexuals was the police, and that was only in order to arrest them.[1671]

When addressing America at large, Carter became the first presidential nominee to speak publicly about gay rights. Although he believed homosexuality to be sinful, he declared publicly that homosexuals should not be harassed or subjected to discrimination, but should

[1671] Louie Crew in a personal interview, 3 March 2014.

enjoy the same rights as other Americans. Carter's actions played a major role in offering visibility, respect and legitimisation to the gay rights issue.

Paving the Way for Open Dialogue between Administration and Gay Rights Groups

One of Carter's greatest achievements was to put the issue of gay rights and engagement with gay rights activists on the table for future Presidents. At the same time, Carter contributed uniquely to the legitimisation of the gay rights movement by holding meetings with activists in the White House itself. That the NGTF and like-minded groups could take their concerns directly to the highest authority in the country in the White House was of tremendous symbolic significance, demonstrating how the President of the USA recognised the existence of homosexuals, listened to their needs and sought to address their issues. In addition to the White House meetings, and of equal importance, Carter opened the way for gay rights activists to engage in dialogue with federal agencies, hitherto a bastion of resistance. This access enabled activists to speak directly to the people they needed to address, while further legitimising the status of the movement as a whole. Many of the advances during Carter's presidency were achieved by the NGTF talking to the federal agencies. However, even then, such changes would have been unachievable without the influence of Carter's White House, as exemplified by the Bureau of Prisons.

How important access to the White House and the federal agencies was for gay activists is evident in a letter from the NGTF leadership to its members less than a year after Reagan became President, which expressed its despair at the new situation. It said in part, "We have been shunned by the White House … our contacts at the numerous agencies of the federal government have been cut off or severely restricted."[1672]

[1672] NGTF Board of Directors announcement. December 1981. 'Dear Friend.' Letter over the signatures of Bill Beauchamp and Barbara Weinstock, co-chairs. NGTF records, Box 3, Folder 11, CU.

Appointments of Openly Acknowledged Homosexuals

Carter's appointment policies also contributed to the legitimisation of the gay community. He appointed several homosexuals to his Cabinet and to public positions, such as four prominent lesbian activists, Jill Schropp, Ginny Apuzzo, Ruth Abram and Jean O'Leary. More important was the appointment of Midge Costanza, an ardent feminist and outspoken gay rights activist, who would become the driving force behind all the positive changes for homosexuals that occurred up to 1978, when she left the White House.

Carter demonstrated particular courage in making such appointments, aware of the anger, dissatisfaction and likely loss of support they would cause among conservative Christians, especially since he did not appoint any evangelicals to his administration, as they had confidently expected. The appointments brought homosexual Americans to the front line of politics, allowing them to demonstrate that they could occupy high office in government and the public sector like anyone else.

The effect of appointing homosexuals or gay friendly people to important positions became evident following the changes Carter made to the Women's National Committee. The President accepted Costanza's recommendations and replaced all the conservative members, who had been appointed by Ford, with feminists and two acknowledged lesbians, O'Leary and Abram. The new Committee played an instrumental role at the NWC in Houston in 1977, a ground-breaking event for American lesbians. The NWC helped lesbian activists to achieve their goals of visibility and legitimacy. For the first time, lesbian activists were given a forum at a major event to talk, argue and express their views at the national level. Never before had Americans switched on their TV sets to see and hear talk of lesbian rights – and this at an event organised by the White House.

The NWC also offered legitimacy to lesbian activists when their sexual preference plank was passed as one of the Conference's resolutions, and their need for equal rights and struggle against sexual discrimination were recognised by an official governmental body, Carter's Women's Committee. None of this would have happened if Carter had not made the changes to the Committee which Costanza had recommended.

1980

The results of Carter's positive contribution to the legitimisation and discourse around homosexuality can be seen in events which took place in 1980. At the 1976 Republican Convention, none of the delegates was openly homosexual, while at the Democratic Convention there were just three. Four years later, there were seventy-seven openly homosexual delegates to the Democratic Convention and two at the Republican, the first time acknowledged homosexuals participated at the latter event. At the 1980 Presidential elections, Mel Boozer became the first openly declared homosexual to run for the Vice Presidency, while David McReynolds, also gay and "out," became the first such to run for President.

Also before the 1980 elections, the NGTF sent a questionnaire to all the nominees for president and vice president asking them to state their position on gay rights. This was something which had never been done before and was a clear sign of how things had progressed during the four years of Carter's term. Another indicator of gay activists' growing self-confidence took place at the 1980 elections when they organised a fundraiser to support the openly homosexual delegates at the two big parties' conventions. It was another "first." The difference between 1976 and 1980 is inescapable evidence of Carter's contribution to the gay rights' cause and the support he received from most gay voters in 1980 signalled their recognition of his efforts.

Carter's Other Contributions to the Legitimisation of the Gay Community

The WHCF, which was organised by Carter himself, made a massive contribution towards legitimising the gay community. Not only did Carter approve the participation of acknowledged homosexuals, on the vexed questions of relationships, he conceded that there could be such entities as homosexual families. Like the NWC, the WHCF gave gay rights activists the opportunity to speak on national television and talk to quality newspapers about their cause, a visibility they had never experienced.

In the wake of the NWC, this was the turn of gay men to expound upon their needs and what they believed to be their rights. An unexpected side-effect was that several participants declared themselves homosexual in front of the television cameras. Finally, the conference passed a resolution calling for an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. All of these developments showed how much things had changed in four years under Carter, changes which ironically became visible at a conference intended to strengthen the American family and which was organised by the President of the USA himself. In all, an enormous contribution to the legitimization of homosexuality in the United States.

Carter also contributed to the legitimisation of the gay community via the following actions:

- In 1980, after intervention from the White House, gay veterans were allowed to participate in a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to honour gay soldiers who died in battle. This was a highly controversial decision and particularly angered the evangelical right. However, for the gay community, this was the Army and the Government recognising that there were gay soldiers in the American Army, one of the most sacred institutions in the United States.
- He publicly opposed Proposition 6. That made him the first American president to make a public pronouncement that supported gay rights.

- He sent an aide to attend a fundraising event organised by gay rights activists.
- He repeatedly stated in public that he was against sexual discrimination and the harassment of homosexuals.
- He gave writer Tennessee Williams, an acknowledged homosexual, the Medal of Freedom.
- Midge Costanza's appearance in Dade County was perceived by both gay rights and the evangelical right as a sign of Carter's endorsement of homosexuality since Costanza was his assistant.
- He allowed a gay rights plank at the 1980 Democratic Convention.

Cultural Framing

Carter's policies and decisions contributed significantly towards framing gay rights as a normal, legitimate concern, and activists in this area as legitimate political actors with the right to be listened to. He achieved this by:

- engaging directly with gay rights organisations;
- being the first sitting president to make a public statement in favour of a gay rights ruling;
- implementing legislation that had a direct, positive impact on gay rights;
- appointing open homosexuals to his Cabinet and to federal positions;
- facilitating meetings between federal agencies and the NGTF;
- generally treating gay rights activists and gay citizens and immigrants with respect.

As Robert Malson, Carter's associate director of the White House domestic policy staff, said in 1980, "Gay people are being drawn into the everyday routine decisions of staff and are being accepted as part of the political community. At the White House gay issues are an active part of the responsibilities of staff people. On both the Domestic Policy staff and the

Public Liaison office staff people are specifically assigned to monitor gay and lesbian concerns."[1673]

Summary

There can be no doubt that Carter legitimised gay rights in the United States. It is an achievement which resists mathematical calculation but which can be measured against the circumstances of the time. One measure would be the gulf between the gay experience in 1976 when Carter became President and how gays stood when he left office four years later. The *New York Post*'s headline on the March 1977 White House meeting, "From Closet to Street to Respect,"[1674] and Costanza's comment that "the gay movement was finally legitimized,"[1675] are proof of the legitimisation and respect the movement gained under Carter. All seventeen gay rights activists interviewed for this study agreed that Carter showed respect to them personally and to their movement, and that he legitimised their struggle.

ENABLING THE GAY COMMUNITY TO BECOME AWARE OF ITS OWN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

In the mid-1970s, few homosexuals were active in the cause of gay rights. The NGTF, the largest organization of this type, was formed only in October 1973 and was taking its first, mostly unsuccessful, steps. It was unable to establish any communication with the Government or federal agencies. Most homosexuals could not see any reason to become active in the struggle as there was no end product, and many gay organisations were more like social clubs than special interest groups. All this changed during Carter's presidency. His

[1673] Memorandum from Robert Malson to administration staff, 20 May 1980, Robert Malson's Subject File, (Gay) Homosexuals, (7/20/79-5/31/80), 07/20/1979 - 05/31/1980. JCPL.
[1674] Lipsyte (*New York Post*), 28 March 1977, "From Closet to Street to Respect." Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.
[1675] Letter from Midge Costanza to James Woodward, n.d. Midge Costanza Archives. MCI.

invitation to activists to meet in the White House and his continuing engagement in dialogue with them had a profound effect on the homosexual community. The growing legitimisation and visibility of the movement, along with the fast-changing public discourse on homosexuality, prompted numbers of gays to organise seriously.

The White House meeting in particular was a catalyst for the enlargement and strengthening of the NGTF and the movement as a whole. For the first time, activists realised that they could get results by organising and lobbying. This meeting was followed by other encounters with the Carter administration but also with federal agencies, leading to important policy changes. These early successes by the NGTF were hugely important and persuaded many homosexuals to join the struggle for their rights, convinced that at last they could be heard and could influence policy.

It should also be noted that another reason that contributed to the enlargement and strengthening of the NGTF and other gay rights organizations was the IRS's decision to grant them tax-exemption status. Tax-exemption meant that these organisations had now considerably more funds and, in some cases, could afford to hire and pay professionals rather than relying on volunteers. They also had more money to spend on advertising, enabling them to reach out to the dispersed homosexual community and grow their membership. Overall, having a larger budget at their disposal meant that gay-rights organisations could become better organised, more highly functioning, bigger, stronger and more influential.

THE EVANGELICAL RIGHT AND THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT DURING CARTER'S PRESIDENCY

Carter's presidency had a big effect on both the gay rights and evangelical movements. During the 1976 campaign, evangelicals were Carter's closest allies, but he courted and received the support of both sides. Gay rights groups were effectively part of a wider human

rights movement that included feminists and activists for abortion rights and which grew out of the drive for civil rights. The evangelical right, on the other hand, was a reaction against the gay rights and feminist and abortion rights groups of the 1970s. Both gays and evangelicals were very important in the development of America's culture wars, which continue to this day. The two movements were alike in that they tried to attract as many members as possible, mobilize their support during elections and tell them who to vote for. The major difference was that gay rights activists were seeking to bring about social change, while the evangelicals fought to block it and preserve the status quo.

Carter seemed to have a remarkable ability to upset both sides, despite their different agendas. For gay rights activists, what he did was never enough and they constantly asked for more. Ironically, the victories he did achieve for homosexuals, no matter how trivial, were important enough to annoy the evangelicals. For example, Carter's Civil Service Reform Act protected homosexuals from discrimination in 95% of the federal agencies, but gay rights activists were unhappy that the security services (the outstanding 5%) were not covered and pressed Carter for an executive order banning discrimination in these agencies, too. This was despite the fact that Carter had made it clear during his election campaign that he supported an end to sexual discrimination in all federal agencies except the security services.

Naturally, the Civil Service Reform Act angered the evangelical right anyway. Another example of upsetting both sides concerned the tax exemption that was given to all gay organizations. The evangelical right was unhappy, especially since its tax exception status was revoked. On the other hand, gay rights activists were not entirely happy either because they wanted gay families to have the right to file joint tax returns, declaring each other as dependents.

The Gay Rights Movement

The gay rights movement was in existence long before the Carter Presidency; but it was then that it first came to prominence and achieved its biggest victories. This was mostly because he was the first sitting American president to deal directly with gay rights activists and to attempt to address their grievances, thus legitimising the movement. Carter legitimised the movement not only at the political level, but in the eyes of the nation, so that the push for gay rights expanded in the second half of the 1970s.

Gay voters were mobilized for the first time in the 1976 elections after Carter publicly courted their vote, and when he secured office, they joined the struggle for gay rights, believing they could now make a difference. The newfound legitimacy and visibility provided by Carter's decisions and policies helped the movement reach new heights. It grew in numbers as more homosexuals became convinced that they could achieve real change by getting organized and joining the struggle. More significantly, it also grew in influence as it suddenly found itself for the first time in direct dialogue with the Government and Federal agencies. However, it was not Carter's policies alone that strengthened the movement but also the mobilization of the evangelical right. Sensing danger from a well-organised and hostile evangelical right, homosexuals lined up to join the battle.

The Evangelical Right Movement

Evangelicals supported Carter in 1976, because he was seen as "one of them," even though he was more liberal than most in his religious beliefs. However, their relationship got off on the wrong foot when Carter failed to appoint any evangelicals to his staff as had been expected. Relations were never the same after this. As much as Carter's actions led to changes for the gay rights movement, so did they affect the evangelical right, but for exactly the opposite reasons. The rapidly evolving social environment (inclusing issues such as

abortion, the ERA, homosexuality) and Carter's liberal policies (as they saw them) towards homosexuals, angered the believers, provoking them into energetic counter-reaction.

Perceiving what they believed was a threat to the American family and the country's traditional way of life, prominent leaders such as Jerry Falwell got busy organising special interest groups to fight the threat of moral decay and fight to preserve traditional American values. These groups, functioning as a clear counter-movement to the gay rights movement, were also able to galvanise growing numbers of Americans, both to passively support their cause and to actively engage with it. The evangelical right perceived the growing access to the echelons of power by gay rights activists as an existential threat, and acted quickly to mobilise its members in activism against gay rights and other progressive issues.

The heightened emotions experienced by members of this group in response to Carter's decisions helped to motivate many of them to become even more vociferous and organised against what they saw as the progressive threat, and specifically against any gains made in favour of gay rights. Gay rights were experienced as a very emotive issue, and anti-gay rights activists focussed on arousing negative sentiments among Americans. Carter, the born-again Christian, paid dearly in terms of losing evangelical support for his decision to legitimise gay rights, and grant gay rights activists' unprecedented access to the highest echelons of power.

It would be justifiable to argue that by virtue of his policies and decisions, Carter unintentionally gave birth to the evangelical right, which quickly became a prominent force in national politics and remains as such today. As they organised, evangelicals achieved several of their immediate goals, including defeating a number of liberal politicians. Their number one target was Carter himself and they succeeded with him, too, in the 1980 Presidential election, though the extent of their contribution to his defeat has been debated.

Interest Groups

During Carter's presidency, interest groups increasingly emerged as energetic, focused political players. Both anti- and pro-gay rights groups became increasingly politically agile as his presidency progressed. To the present, interest group politics have become an incrementally more important aspect of the US political scene. Today, any President or Presidential candidate is likely to be assailed on all sides by a wide range of interest groups, each of which is seeking for its particular issue to be addressed. Throughout this period (1976-1980), interest groups became incrementally more important, contributing both to decisions taken by him and to his defeat in his second Presidential election. Since then, interest groups have grown to become almost an industry in their own right.

Here we have explored the role of gay rights interest groups (especially the NGTF) and evangelical right groups. With their intense grassroots activities and political lobbying, both can be seen as pioneers in the area of modern direct representation to government. Almost forty years later, the two sides are still fighting each other, with issues like abortion and gay rights constantly on the agenda of the evangelical right. Each side has had notable successes, although the evangelical right, while still an important player in American politics, has not been able to halt growing liberalism in regard to homosexuality. However, it has succeeded in delaying progress in the area of gay rights and by securing a central role for religion in government by means of specific appointments. As for the gay rights movement, it has obtained significant advances for homosexuals, including, just recently, marriage between people of the same sex.

CONCLUSION

Today, the issue of gay rights is a normal part of policy discussion in the US, and substantial rights have been won in this area as the gay rights movement has continued to build on the

"ideological heritage"[1676] that was framed in the 1970s. The issue benefited considerably from the legitimacy it won from Carter and his contribution to the framing of gay activism as an ordinary, legitimate element of the liberal agenda. Despite subsequent backlash against gay rights, the movement was enabled to build upon tangible gains made during Carter's presidency by levering its newfound legitimacy to make its voice heard throughout society.

However, Carter's contribution to gay rights has not won the recognition it deserves and remains a largely unexplored aspect of his presidency even today. In his time, gay rights activists recognised and acknowledged his efforts, but these advances seem subsequently to have been forgotten or less appreciated. If some of Carter's achievements appear unimportant today, when same-sex marriages are legal, it is important to remember that he acted at a time when homosexuality was considered by many Americans to be a disease which could be cured by treatment.

Although Carter's role in advancing gay rights has been underestimated and little publicized, it has not gone entirely unrecognised. Gay rights activists who were active in the 1970s do recognise Carter's role in advancing their cause and this is very important as they are the ones who experienced Carter's efforts. The advancements in gay rights that we witness today owe a great deal to Carter's input in this area. It is this author's contention that the efforts made by the Carter administration should be recognised as the catalyst for dramatic change that, in fact, they were. Carter left a very important, even a transformative legacy in the area of gay rights.

[1676] Klandermans, 2004: 368.

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Professor Randall Balmer: Author and historian of American religion, Professor in the Arts & Sciences Chair, Department of Religion, Dartmouth College.

Peter Bourne: Carter’s biographer, special assistant to President Carter for health issues and Director of the Office of Drug Abuse Policy; Carter’s very close friend.

Professor Charlotte Bunch: Feminist scholar and activist, member of the NGTF, professor at Rutgers University, founder of the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership.

Dr. Tony Campolo: Sociologist, pastor, author, public speaker, former spiritual advisor to U.S. President Bill Clinton and one of the most influential leaders in the Evangelical left.

Jimmy Creech: A pioneer in LGTB rights, and an expert on religiously based bigotry, a founding member of the North Carolina Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality and currently the Board Chairman of the North Carolina Social Justice Project.

Louie Crew: Gay activist, National Gay Task Force board of directors 1976-1978.

Professor John d'Emilio: Professor of history, women and gender studies at University of Illinois at Chicago and former Director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay Task Force.

Michael Dukakis: 1988 Democratic nominee for US President, former Governor of Massachusetts and currently Professor of Public Policy in UCLA.

James Fallows: Carter's speech-writer and journalist.

Marilyn Haft: She served the Carter Administration as Associate Director of the Office of Public Liaison in the White House (Costanza's assistant), where she was the liaison to organized interest groups in the areas of human rights, business and the arts. She was later appointed Deputy Counsel to Vice President Walter Mondale in the White House and then ran the New York City campaign for the re-election of President Carter.

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David Mack Henderson: Gay rights activist and founder of the Fairness Fort Worth.

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Danny Meyer: Public Affairs Officer for the American Veterans for Equal Rights

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Professor Byron E. Shafer: Hawkins Chair of Political Science in the University of Wisconsin-Madison, author of the Q*uiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics.*

Dr. Morris Sheats: Senior Pastor, founder of the Trinity Church in Lubbock, Texas, of the Leadership Institute and of the Heritage Church of Dallas.

Richard Socarides: President Bill Clinton's White House adviser on gay and lesbian rights issues, writer and commentator in *The New Yorker*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*.

Professor Amy L. Stone: Professor of Sociology at the Trinity University, author of *Gay Rights at the Ballot-Box.*

Professor Sarah Weddington: attorney, Law professor and Jimmy Carter's assistant 1978-1981.

Professor Clyde Wilcox: Professor in the Government Department at Georgetown, author of many books about interest groups and the Christian Right.

Mel White: Author, member of the Evangelical Protestant movement through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, also biographer of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Billy Graham and James Dobson.

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